MARVEL® GRAPHIC NOVEL

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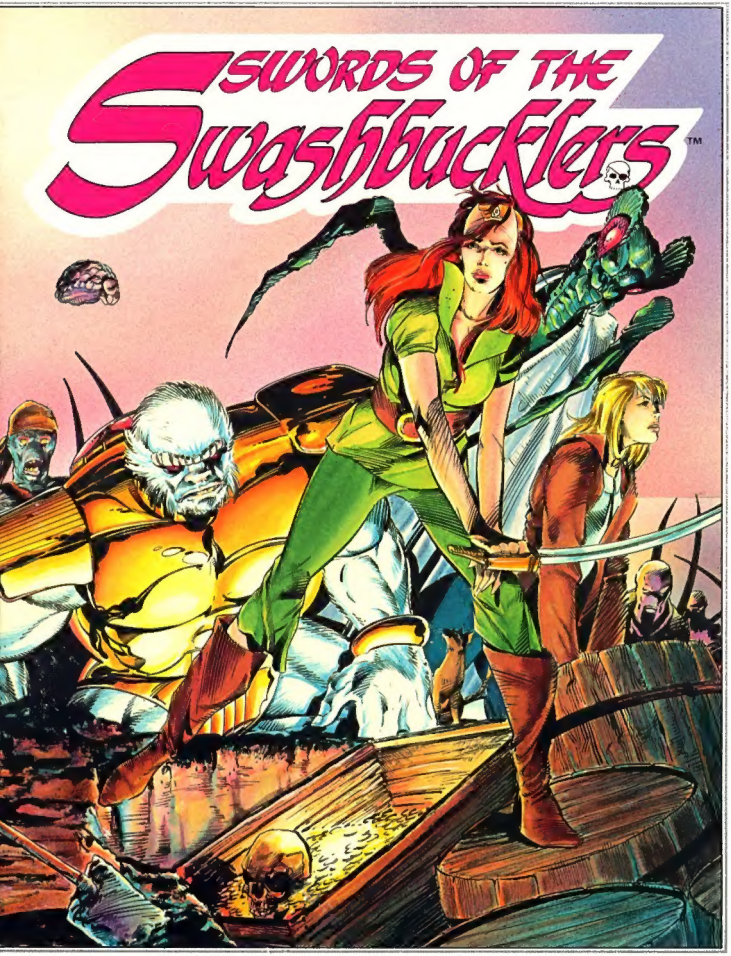
SWORDS OF THE SWASHBUCKLERS™



by BILL MANTLO and JACKSON GUICE

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A MARVEL®
GRAPHIC NOVEL

SWORDS OF THE Swashbucklers™

by Bill Mantlo and Jackson Guice

Lettering: Ken Bruzenak
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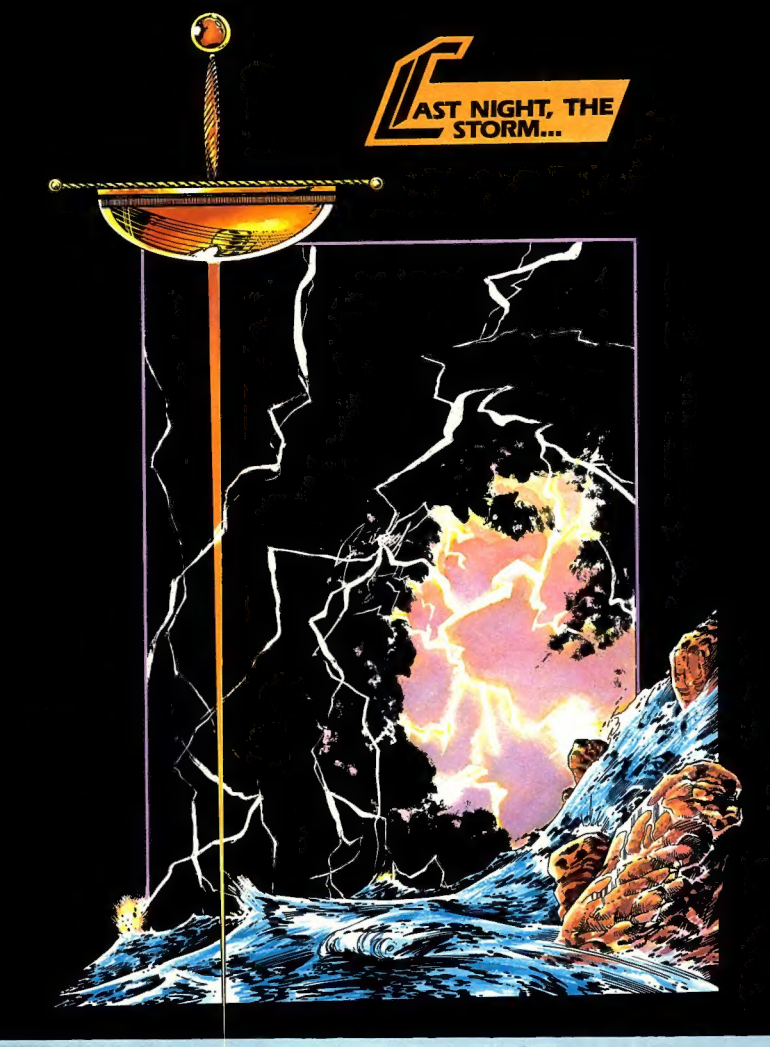
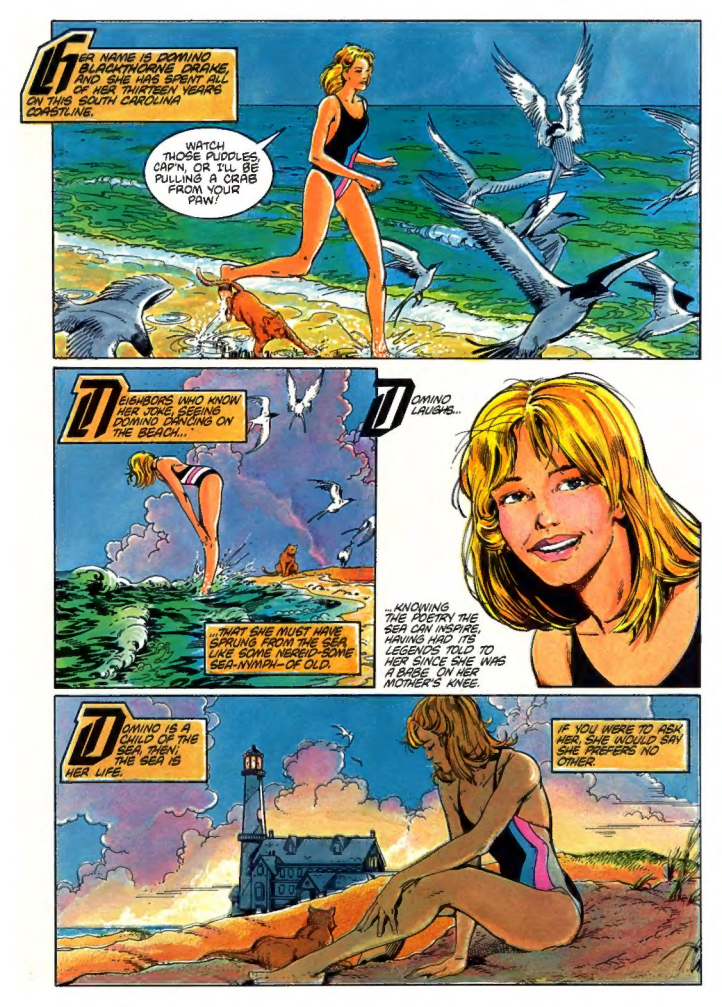

LAST NIGHT, THE STORM...

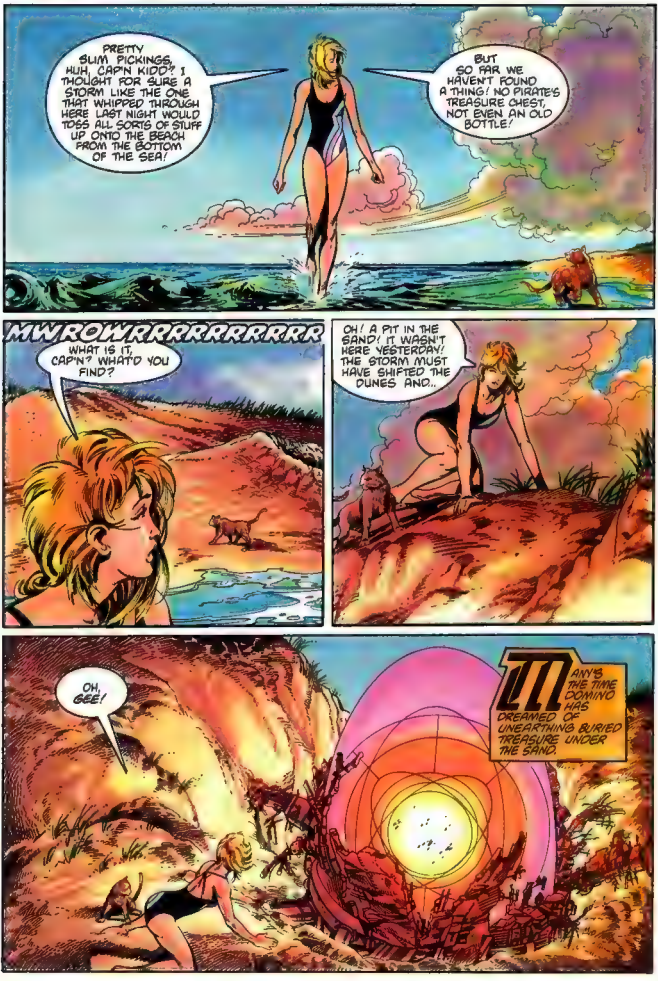
TODAY...

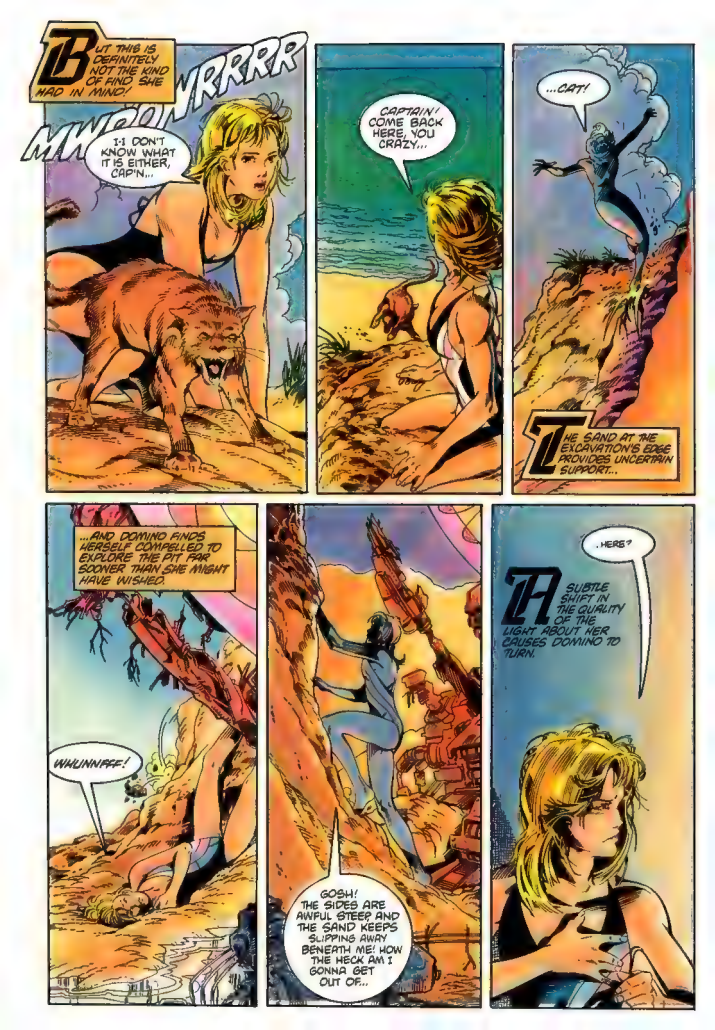
C'MON, CAPN KIDD! LET'S SEE WHAT THE STORM'S WASHED UP ON THE BEACH!

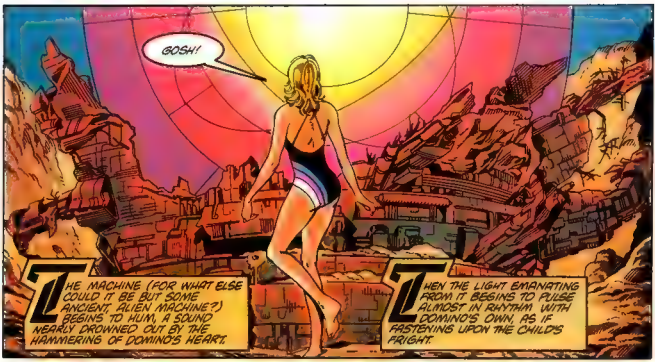

Her name is Domino Blackthorne Drake, and she has spent all of her thirteen years on this South Carolina coastline.
Watch those puddles, Cap'n, or I'll be pulling a crab from your paw!
Neighbors who know her joke, seeing Domino dancing on the beach...
...that she must have sprung from the sea like some nereid--some sea-nymph--of old.
Domino laughs...
...knowing the poetry the sea can inspire, having had its legends told to her since she was a babe on her mother's knee.
Domino is a child of the sea, then; the sea is her life.
If you were to ask her, she would say she prefers no other.

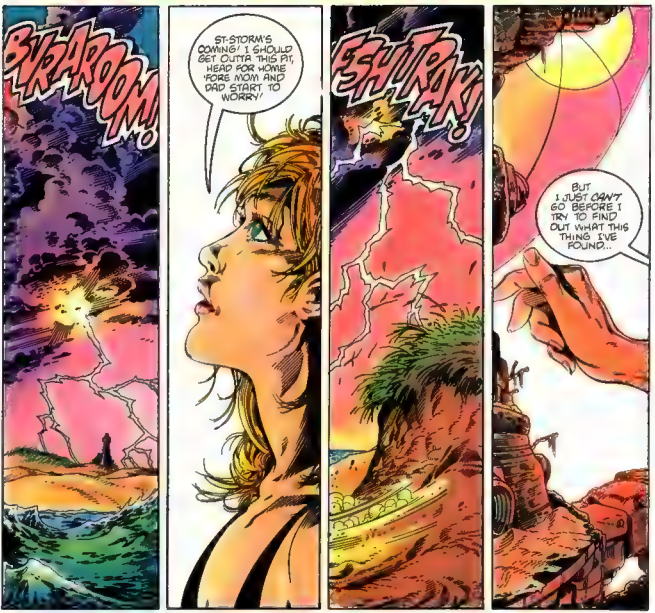
DAMN IT, PAM, THAT'S BECAUSE SHE DOESN'T KNOW ANY OTHER KIND OF LIFE!
WE'RE NOT GOING TO GO OVER ALL THAT AGAIN, ARE WE JIM? DOMINO LOVES LIVING OUT HERE, JUST AS I DID WHEN I WAS HER AGE. JUST AS MY MOTHER DID BEFORE ME.
WHY CAN'T YOU JUST ACCEPT THAT WE BLACKTHORNE WOMEN HAVE ALWAYS REGARDED THE SEA AS OUR HOME?
OH, PLEASE, PAM, DON'T LECTURE ME ON THAT "FAMILY HISTORY" CRAP AGAIN!
WHY NOT? THAT'S HOW WE MET, ISN'T IT, AT COLLEGE, WHERE YOU WERE RESEARCHING THE HISTORY OF PIRACY OFF THE CAROLINA COASTLINE 200 YEARS AGO?

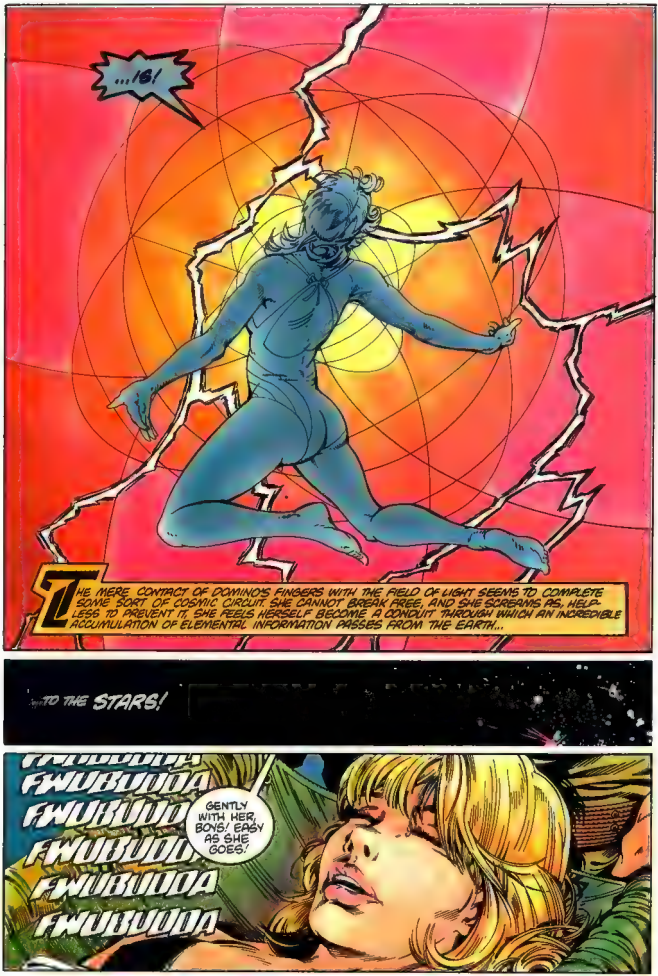
I WAS A LIVING EXTENSION OF THAT HISTORY, WASN'T I, JIM DRAKE, THE DIRECT DESCENDANT OF A FAMOUS PIRATE QUEEN LIVING IN AN OLD LIGHTHOUSE MY GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-GREAT GRANDMOTHER BUILT?!
I LOVED TALKING ABOUT IT. YOU LOVED LISTENING...
AND WE FELL IN LOVE, GOT MARRIED...
-AND 16 YEARS LATER I'M STILL STUDYING THAT HISTORY AND YOU'RE STILL ILLUSTRATING IT!
CAN'T YOU SEE, HONEY, WE'RE ALL SO STUCK IN THE PAST THAT NONE OF US, DOMINO INCLUDED, CAN FUNCTION IN THE PRESENT!
MAYBE YOU CAN'T, JIM. DOMINO AND I ARE JUST FINE, THANK YOU!
SHE GOES TO SCHOOL ON THE MAINLAND, SEES HER FRIENDS EVERY DAY...
BUT SHE'D RATHER SPEND EVERY WAKING MOMENT SEARCHING THE BEACH WITH THAT CAT OF HERS, DREAMING OF THE SEA, AND SHIPS, AND TREASURE BURIED BY HER ANCESTOR, THE PIRATE QUEEN, BONNIE BLACKTHORNE!
WELL, MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT, JIM. MAYBE DOMINO SHOULD EXPERIENCE SOMETHING... NEW. SO WHAT DO WE DO?
I DUNNO, BABE. GET AWAY? ALL OF US TAKE A TRIP TOGETHER? HAW! TO THE DESERT, MAYBE.
ALL I KNOW IS... DOMINO'S GOT TO EXPAND HER HORIZONS!
WHAT, AS DOMINO'S FATHER IS ABOUT TO LEARN, MAY HAPPEN FAR FASTER THAN ANYONE SUSPECTS.


PRETTY SLIM PICKINGS, HUH, CAP'N KIDD? I THOUGHT FOR SURE A STORM LIKE THE ONE THAT WHIPPED THROUGH HERE LAST NIGHT WOULD TOSS ALL SORTS OF STUFF UP ONTO THE BEACH FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA!
BUT SO FAR WE HAVEN'T FOUND A THING! NO PIRATE'S TREASURE CHEST, NOT EVEN AN OLD BOTTLE!
MWROWRRRRRRRRRR
WHAT IS IT, CAPN'? WHAT'D YOU FIND?
OH! A PIT IN THE SAND! IT WASN'T HERE YESTERDAY! THE STORM MUST HAVE SHIFTED THE DUNES AND..
OH, GEE!
MANY'S THE TIME DOMINO HAS DREAMED OF UNEARTHING BURIED TREASURE UNDER THE SAND!


BUT THIS IS DEFINITELY NOT THE KIND OF FIND SHE HAD IN MIND!
MWOOMRRRR
I-I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS EITHER, CAP'N...
CAPTAIN! COME BACK HERE, YOU CRAZY...
...CAT!
THE SAND AT THE EXCAVATION'S BASE PROVIDES UNCERTAIN SUPPORT...
...AND DOMINO FINDS HERSELF COMPELLED TO EXPLORE THE PIT FAR SOONER THAN SHE MIGHT HAVE WISHED.
WHUNNFF!
GOSH! THE SIDES ARE AWFUL STEEP AND THE SAND KEEPS SLIPPING AWAY BENEATH ME! HOW THE HECK AM I GONNA GET OUT OF...
A SUBTLE SHIFT IN THE QUALITY OF THE LIGHT ABOUT HER CAUSES DOMINO TO TURN.
...HERE?


BOSH!
THE MACHINE (FOR WHAT ELSE COULD IT BE BUT SOME ANCIENT, ALIEN MACHINE?) BEGINS TO HUM, A SOUND NEARLY DROWNED OUT BY THE HAMMERING OF DOMINO'S HEART.
THEN THE LIGHT EMANATING FROM IT BEGINS TO PULSE ALMOST IN RHYTHM WITH DOMINO'S OWN, AS IF FASTENING UPON THE CHILD'S FRIGHT.

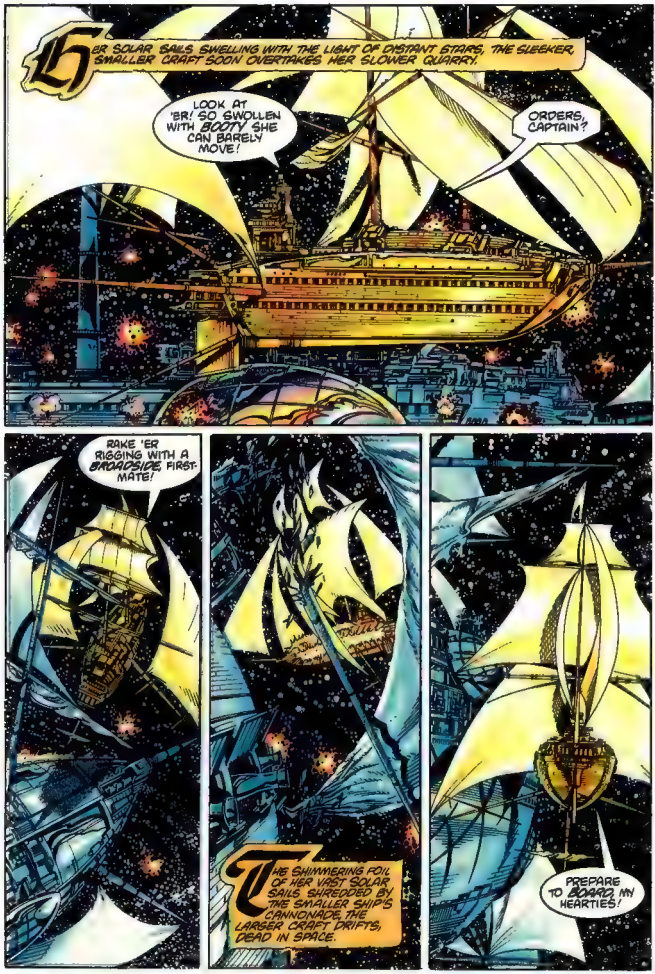

BYRROOM!
ST-STORM'S COMING! I SHOULD GET OUTTA THIS PIT, HEAD FOR HOME 'FORE MOM AND DAD START TO WORRY!
FSHTRK!
BUT I JUST CAN'T GO BEFORE I TRY TO FIND OUT WHAT THIS THING I'VE FOUND...


...!G!
THE MERE CONTACT OF DOMINO'S FINGERS WITH THE FIELD OF LIGHT SEEMS TO COMPLETE SOME SORT OF COSMIC CIRCUIT. SHE CANNOT BREAK FREE, AND SHE SCREAMS AS, HELPLESS TO PREVENT IT, SHE FEELS HERSELF BECOME A CONDUIT THROUGH WHICH AN INCREDIBLE ACCUMULATION OF ELEMENTAL INFORMATION PASSES FROM THE EARTH...
...TO THE STARS!
FWUBUUDA
FWUBUUDA
FWUBUUDA
FWUBUUDA
FWUBUUDA
GENTLY WITH HER, BOYS! EASY AS SHE GOES!

OH, JIM, WHY DIDN'T I LISTEN TO YOU? WHY DIDN'T WE TAKE DOMINO AWAY FROM HERE BEFORE?
AIR-SEA RESCUE
DON'T BLAME YOURSELF, PAM THERE WAS NO WAY IN HEAVEN ANYONE COULD FORESEE THAT OUR LITTLE GIRL WOULD BE HURT BY...
BY WHAT? GOOD GOD IN HEAVEN, BY WHATEVER THAT THING IS IN THE ATT!
THE SOLDIER BOYS WANT TO ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS 'BOUT THAT THINGY, MR. DRAKE, BEIN' AS HOW YOU LIVE OUT HERE.
BUT DOMINO--?!
I'LL FLY WITH HER TO THE MAINLAND, JIM! YOU STAY HERE--
--AND TRY TO FIND OUT WHAT THAT THING IS THAT'S HURT OUR BABY!
IF FOLLOW THE COPTER BEARING DOMINO DRAKE AS IT RISES TOWARDS THE SKY...

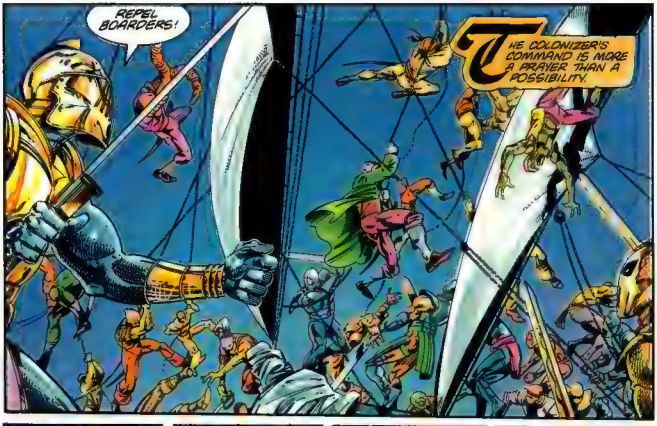
...and the STARS!

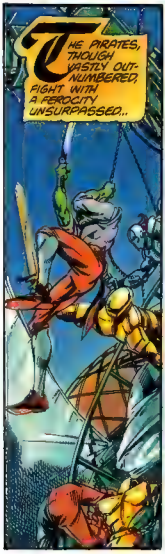
SOMEWHERE, FAR, FAR AWAY, TWO VESSELS MANEUVER FOR POSITION, DESTRUCTIVE FIRE FROM THEIR GUNPORTS LEAPING ACROSS THE EVER-NARROWING GULF BETWEEN THEM.


HER SOLAR SAILS SWELLING WITH THE LIGHT OF DISTANT STARS, THE SLEEKER, SMALLER CRAFT SOON OVERTAKES HER SLOWER QUARRY.
LOOK AT 'ER! SO SWOLLEN WITH BOOTY SHE CAN BARELY MOVE!
ORDERS, CAPTAIN?
RAKE 'ER RIGGING WITH A BROADSIDE, FIRST-MATE!
THE SHIMMERING FOIL OF HER VAST SOLAR SAILS SHREDDED BY THE SMALLER SHIP'S CANNONADE, THE LARGER CRAFT DRIFTS, DEAD IN SPACE.
PREPARE TO BOARD, MY HEARTIES!

CONSTERNATION REIGNS ABOARD THE LARGER SHIP!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, QUARTITE AL'ZAN: INQUIRE ABOUT TERMS OF SURRENDER?
I REALIZE THIS IS YOUR FIRST RETRIEVAL RUN IN THIS SECTOR OF SPACE, COLONIZER COMMANDER ZEL'KOR...
...HOWEVER, I DID WARN YOU WHEN YOU LINGERED TO PURSUE YOUR... PLEASURES... WHILE PLUNDERING TALOS II THAT OUR SHIP WAS FAR TOO LARGE AND SLOW TO ESCAPE SHOULD PIRATES FIND US.
PIRATES BE DAMNED! WE HAVE FIVE TIMES THEIR FIREPOWER, TEN TIMES THEIR CREW!
BESIDES, WE REPRESENT THE MIGHT OF THE COLONIZER ARMADA!
ALL TRUE AND INCONTROVERTIBLE COLONIZER COMMANDER, AND I AM SURE NO ONE WOULD DARE ATTACK US WERE THE ARMADA HERE TO OFFER US SAFE PASSAGE.
BUT THE ARMADA IS NOT HERE.
FFWOOM
...WHILE THE PIRATES ARE!!!

GRAVITY GRAPPLES, ARC GRACEFULLY THROUGH THE AIRLESSNESS OF SPACE TO DRIVE DEEP INTO THE DECK OF THE DRIFTING COLONIZER FRIGATE.
A BOARDING PARTY INITIATOR'S RUNNING ALONG THE GRAPPLING LINES FORGE A BREATHABLE CORRIDOR BETWEEN THE PIRATE CRAFT AND HER QUARRY.
THROUGH THAT CORRIDOR, THE SWASHBUCKLERS SWARM!


REPEL BOARDERS!
THE COLONIZER'S COMMAND IS MORE A PRAYER THAN A POSSIBILITY.


THE PIRATES, THOUGH VASTLY OUT-NUMBERED, FIGHT WITH A FEROCITY UNSURPASSED..

...THAT SOON SEES THE DECKS BENEATH THEIR BOOTS AWASH WITH COLONIZER BLOOD

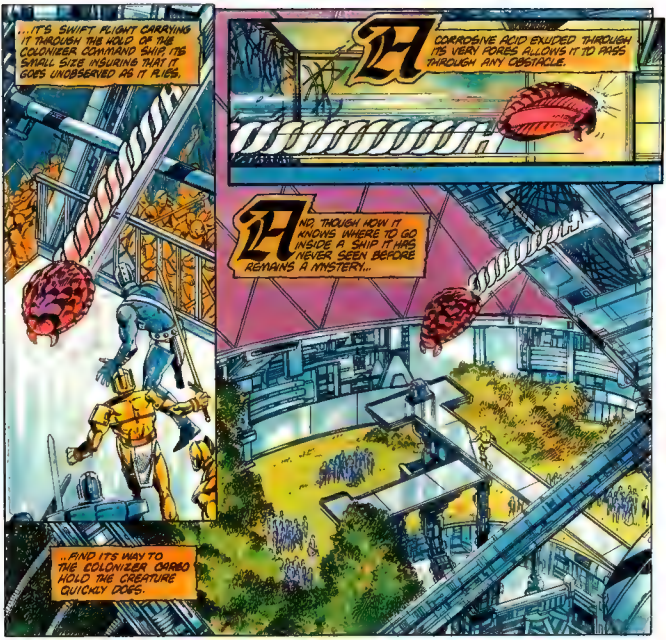
HOW GOES THE BATTLE LOGIK?

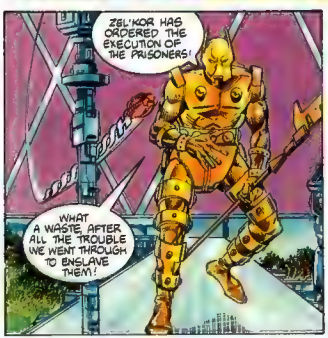
WELL ENOUGH, CAPTAIN, THAT YOUR DESIRE TO ENDANGER YOURSELF BY JOINING IT BORDERS ON THE IRRATIONAL.

MY PLACE IS WITH MY SWASHBUCKLERS, FIRST-MATE!
OF COURSE, FAITHFUL FRIEND! AND MY PET SPYEYE AS WELL!
SERVITOR GO WITH RAADER?
JEEP!
THE MANTID FIRST-MATE, LOGIK, MAKES ONE LAST ATTEMPT TO REASON WITH HIS CAPTAIN.
PLACING YOURSELF IN PERIL IS MOST UNNECESSARY, RAADER.
AYE, THAT IT IS, LOGIK-

--BUT I'M A LASS WHO LIKES THAVE MY FUN!
SERVITOR KEEP RAA'DER SAFE, LOGIK!
BE AFTER HER, THEN, YOU BRAINLESS BRUTE!
A CHEER GOES UP FROM THE CUT-THROAT CREW AS THEY ARE JOINED BY THEIR PIRATE QUEEN!
RAADER!
RAADER HURLS HERSELF INTO THE FRAY WITH A WILD ABANDON!
LET'S MAKE A PRETTY PLAN FOR OUR PRIZE, EH, MY HEARTIES?!
SHE IS RECKLESS, RASH, AS OFTEN AS NOT LEAVING HERSELF OPEN TO ATTACK...
LOOK OUT, LADY!
...BUT THEN SHE KNOWS THAT THE SAVAGE SERVITOR STANDS EVER READY TO GUARD HER REAR.

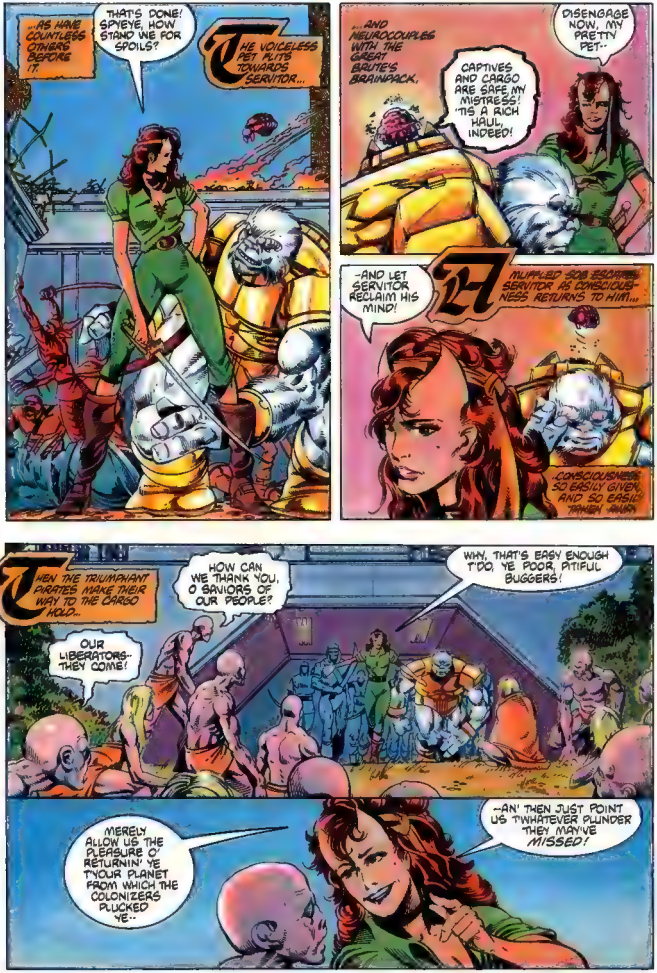
SERVITOR, COME NOT BETWEEN MY FIGHTIN' AN' MY FUN!
RAADER SAVED SERVITOR FROM THE LIVING DEATH OF MINDLESSNESS! SERVITOR MUST PROTECT RAADER!
CAPTAIN
OGIN'S VIVANTIC FEATURES FLICKER ACROSS THE VIEW-SCREEN ON SERVITOR'S MASSIVE INSTRUMENT PACK.
I HAVE INTERCEPTED A SEALED-BEAM COMMUNICATION FROM THE COLONIZER COMMANDER TO HIS CREW, CAPTAIN. HE INTENDS TO JETTISON HIS CARGO IN ORDER TO GAIN SPEED!
HIS CAPTIVES! THEY'LL DIE IN THE VACUUM OF SPACE!
AYE, AND WE'LL LOSE OUR PLUNDER
BY MY BLADE, WE'LL NOT, FIRST-MATE!
SWASHBUCKLERS, YOUR CAPTAIN COMMANDS YOU- FOLLOW ME!
BUTHRAK!
AND FOLLOW RAADER THE PIRATES DO, AS PLANKING STRONGER THAN STEEL GIVES WAY BEFORE THE CRUSHING BLOWS OF SERVITOR.
AND, ONCE INSIDE THE COLONIZER SHIP
SPYEYE! SEE TO THE SAFETY OF THE CAPTIVES!
GFFO!
RAADER'S PET DOES AS ITS MISTRESS DESIRES.

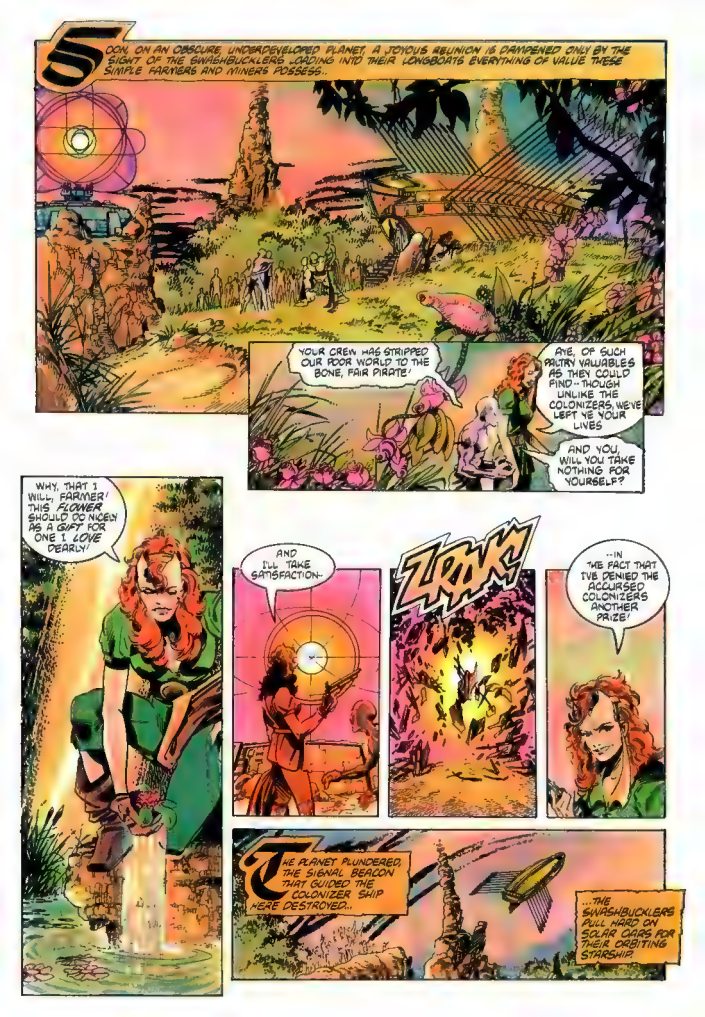

...IT'S SWIFT FLIGHT CARRYING IT THROUGH THE HOLD OF THE COLONIZER COMMAND SHIP. ITS SMALL SIZE INSURING THAT IT GOES UNOBSERVED AS IT FLIES.
CORROSIVE ACID EXUDED THROUGH ITS VERY PORES ALLOWS IT TO PASS THROUGH ANY OBSTACLE.
AND THOUGH HOW IT KNOWS WHERE TO GO INSIDE A SHIP IT HAS NEVER SEEN BEFORE REMAINS A MYSTERY!...
...AND IT'S WAY TO THE COLONIZER CARGO HOLD THE CREATURE QUICKLY DOES.


ZEL'KOR HAS ORDERED THE EXECUTION OF THE PRISONERS!
WHAT A WASTE. AFTER ALL THE TROUBLE WE WENT THROUGH TO ENSLAVE THEM!

THE COLONIZER EXECUTIONER NEED HAVE NO MISGIVINGS REGARDING HIS ORDERS...
GHOK
GUEEAAGHH!
...FOR HE WILL NEVER GET THE CHANCE TO CARRY THEM OUT.

THE SAME CORROSIVE ACID THAT SPIEYE EXUDED TO SEAR THROUGH THE SHIP'S BULKHEADS NOW BURNS THROUGH THE COLONIZER'S FLESH AND BONE, SWINGLIN ARDIN SPIEYE FORGE LINKS TO THE EXECUTIONER'S BRAIN..
..AND SPIEYE TAKES CONTROL!
'TIS A COLONIZER EXECUTIONER!
ARE WE SO SWIFTLY TO BE SLAIN?
O, FOR THE EXECUTIONER'S SHOCKED SLIPS FROM HIS LIFELESS FINGERS...
...AS SPIEYE DISENGAGES, ITS MISSION ACCOMPLISHED.
AND, AT THAT MOMENT, THE SWASHBUCKLERS FIGHT THROUGH TO THE COLONIZER SHIP'S BRIDGE.
I OFFER YOU QUARTER, COMMANDER, IN EXCHANGE FOR YOUR VESSEL, CREW AND CARGO!
SURRENDER, AN' I'LL SET YOU DOWN ON SOME ASTEROID WHERE YE'LL NOT BE ABLE T' COMMUNICATE WI' YOUR ARMADA!
I DO NOT TREAT WITH PLUNDERERS, PIRATE--
--SAVE AT SWORDPOINT!
'TWAS YOU WHO PLUNDERED A DEFENSELESS PLANET, COMMANDER! I AM MY CREW MERELY PLUNDER THE PLUNDERERS!
AN' YOU SHOWED HER CAPTIVES LESS MERCY THAN I WOULD HAVE SHOWN YE!
SCHUNK
BUT AN OFFER REJECTED IS AN OFFER RENEWED! YE'LL HAVE NO MERCY FROM RAARDER, COLONIZER!
THE BATTLE ENDS...

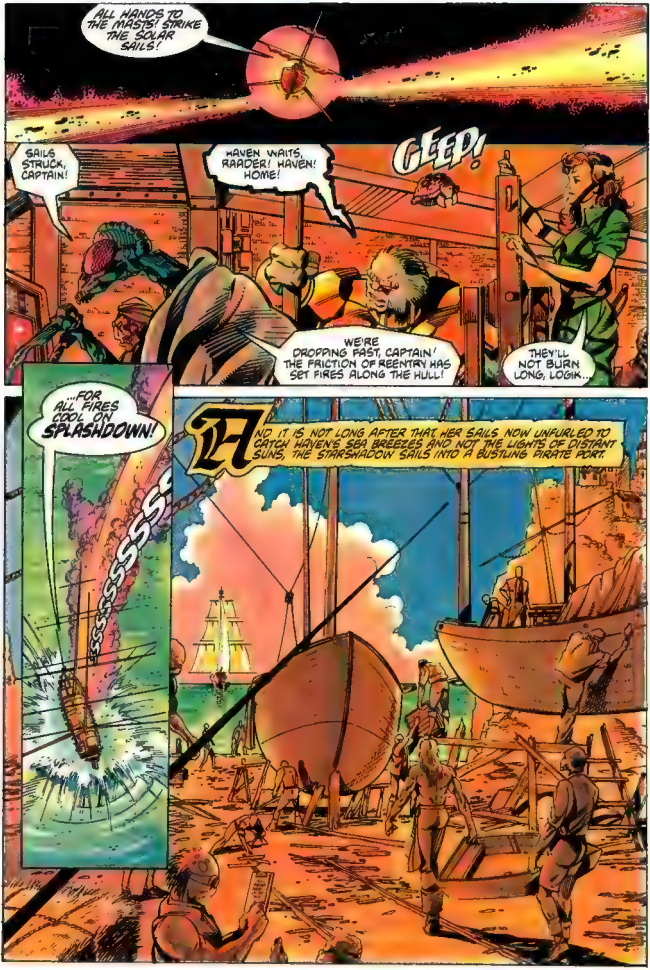

...AS HAVE COUNTLESS OTHERS BEFORE IT.
THAT'S DONE! SPIEVE, HOW STAND WE FOR SPOILS?
THE VOICELESS PET PLOTS TOWARDS SERVITOR...
...AND NEUROCOUPLES WITH THE GREAT BRUTE'S BRAINPACK.
CAPTIVES AND CARGO ARE SAFE MY MISTRESS! 'TIS A RICH HAUL INDEED!
DISENGAGE NOW, MY PRETTY PET--
...AND LET SERVITOR RECLAIM HIS MIND!
...RUMPLED SOB SQUATTER, SERVITOR AS CONSCIOUSNESS RETURNS TO HIM...
CONSCIOUSNESS SO EASILY GIVEN AND SO EASILY TAKEN AGAIN
THEN THE TRIUMPHANT PIRATES MAKE THEIR WAY TO THE CARGO HOLD...
HOW CAN WE THANK YOU, O SAVIORS OF OUR PEOPLE?
WHY, THAT'S EASY ENOUGH T'DO, YE POOR, PITIFUL BUGGERS!
OUR LIBERATORS-- THEY COME!
MERELY ALLOW US THE PLEASURE O' RETURNIN' YE TYOUR PLANET FROM WHICH THE COLONIZERS PLUCKED YE--
--AN' THEN JUST POINT US TWHATEVER PLUNDER THEY MAY'VE MISSED!


SOON, ON AN OBSCURE, UNDERDEVELOPED PLANET, A JOYOUS REUNION IS DAMPENED ONLY BY THE SIGHT OF THE SWASHBUCKLERS LOADING INTO THEIR LONGBOATS EVERYTHING OF VALUE THESE SIMPLE FARMERS AND MINERS POSSESS..
YOUR CREW HAS STRIPPED OUR POOR WORLD TO THE BONE, FAIR PIRATE!
AYE, OF SUCH PALTRY VALUABLES AS THEY COULD FIND -- THOUGH UNLIKE THE COLONIZERS, WE'VE LEFT YE YOUR LIVES
AND YOU, WILL YOU TAKE NOTHING FOR YOURSELF?
WHY, THAT I WILL, FARMER! THIS FLOWER SHOULD DO NICELY AS A GIFT FOR ONE I LOVE DEARLY!
AND I'LL TAKE SATISFACTION--
--IN THE FACT THAT I'VE DENIED THE ACCURSED COLONIZERS ANOTHER PRIZE!
THE PLANET PLUNDERED, THE SIGNAL BEACON THAT GUIDED THE COLONIZER SHIP HERE DESTROYED..
..THE SWASHBUCKLERS ALL HARD ON SOLAR OARS FOR THEIR ORBITING STARSHIP

SOON, BACK ABOARD THE STARSHADOW...
A GOOD HAUL, CAPTAIN?
SOME PRECIOUS STONES FROM PLAYED-OUT MINES, AN' FILAMENT FIBER FOR OUR SOLAR SAILS, LOGIK.
ADD TO THAT THAT WE'VE KEPT A PLANET FROM COLONIZATION FOR ANOTHER DECADE, AT LEAST, AND I'D SAY WE'D DONE A FAIR DAY'S WORK.
BE THAT AS IT MAY, CALL THE QUARTER-MASTER TO APPORTION THE PLUNDER AMONG MY PIRATES, AN' LET'S SHOVE OFF FOR HOME.
I HAVE ALREADY PLOTTED OUR COURSE, CAPTAIN. BUT I FEEL I MUST INFORM YOU--
--OF A RATHER ODD SIGNAL I DETECTED WHILE YOU WERE FIGHTING THE COLONIZERS...AN ARCHAIC WAVELENGTH BROADCAST FROM AN UNFAMILIAR SECTOR OF SPACE.
AROUSED YOUR MANTIS CURIOSITY, DID IT, FIRST-MATE? AYE PERHAPS WE'LL EXPLORE IT--
--AFTER WE'VE PLAYED A BIT!
AS SOLAR SAILS CATCHING THE DISTANT LIGHTS OF HEAVEN, THE STARSHADOW SETS A COURSE FOR HOME!

AND NOME IS A WORLD CALLED...

HAVEN!


ALL HANDS TO THE MASTS! STRIKE THE SOLAR SAILS!
SAILS STRUCK, CAPTAIN!
HAVEN WAITS, RAADER! HAVEN! HOME!
GEEP!
WE'RE DROPPING FAST, CAPTAIN! THE FRICTION OF REENTRY HAS SET FIRES ALONG THE HULL!
THEY'LL NOT BURN LONG, LOOK...
...FOR ALL FIRES COOL ON SPLASHDOWN!
SSSS

AH THERE RAADER IS GREETED AS BEFITS A PIRATE QUEEN!
RAADER!
NEWS TRAVELS FAST, EH, ME BUCKOS?
BUT IS IT ME YE CHEER, OR THE BOOTY I'VE BROUGHT BACK TO HAVEN?
BOTH, RAADER--
--FOR WE DO DEARLY LOVE BOTH!
YE'RE HONEST MATE, I'LL GRANT YE THAT
AN' MAYHAPS I'LL GRANT YE EVEN MORE AFTER I'VE SEEN T'THE DIVISION O' THE SPOILS AMONG MY CREW!
LIKE A VICTOR HOME FROM THE ONLY KIND OF WAR THESE PIRATE KIND DEEM WORTH FIGHTING, RAADER IS PARADED THROUGH THE STREETS OF HAVEN.
ALMS, CAPN!

ALMS FOR AN OLD SEA DOG!
LOOKS MORE LIKE YE COULD USE A GOOD PAIR O' LEGS T'ME MATE!
OUT O' THE WAY, YE SCURVY SWINE! I'LL NOT HAVE YE STINKIN' UP RAADER'S CELEBRATION!
SHIPMATE!
I NEED NO ONE T'SPEAK OR STRIKE FOR ME!
THWOK
AYE, THAT'S THE RAADER I SAILED WITH!
YOU WERE A SWASHBUCKLER, MATE?
THEN HAVE THE SPOILS OF HIM WHO KICKED YOU, FOR THAT DOG WILL SAIL NO MORE!
SHIVER ME TIMBERS!
THE PROCESSION PASSES ON...
...LEAVING ONLY LOGIK AND THE LEGLESS BEGGAR BEHIND.
THAT BOOTY WAS HARD TO COME BY, AND OF LITTLE USE TO A CRIPPLE SUCH AS YOURSELF.
BUT RAADER GIVE IT ME, MATE!

RAADER IS OFTTIMES PROFLIGATE IN THE WAY SHE SPENDS HER PLUNDER.
SNIK
SNIK
YAAAGH...

AND THE COST OF A SHIP AND CREW THESE DAYS IS NOT INCONSIDERABLE

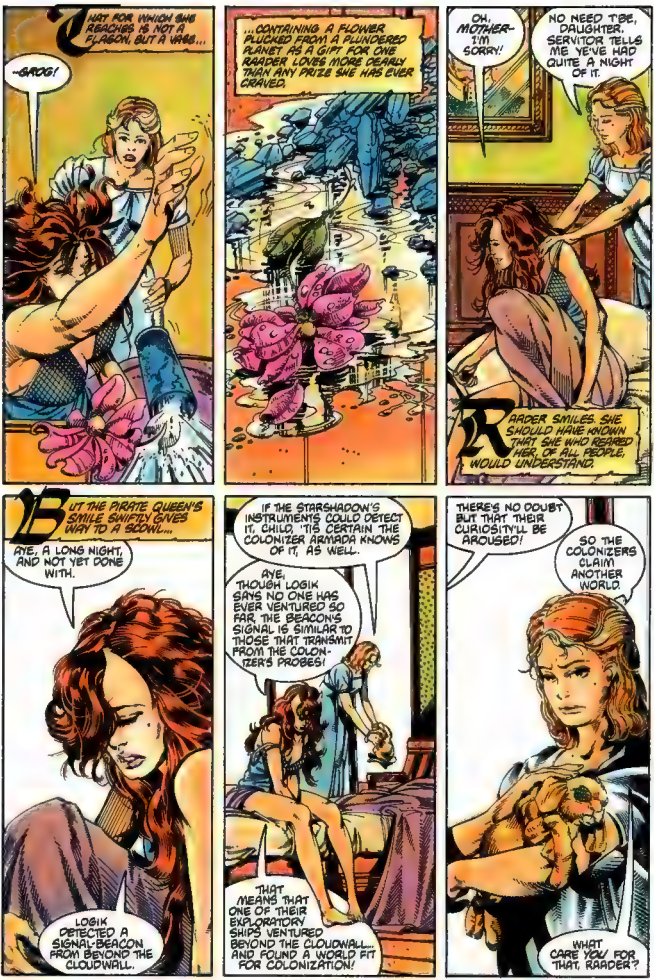
I KNOW, FOR I INTEND TO COMMAND ONE OF MY OWN

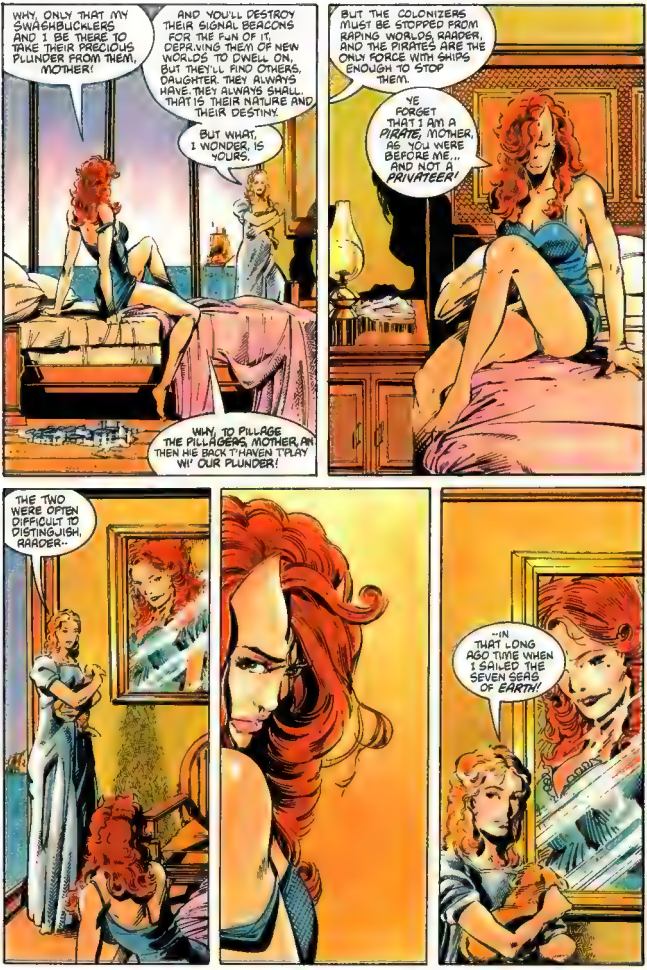
FAR INTO THE NIGHT, REVELLING REIGNS IN A MEAD HALL WHICH IS THE PULSATING HEART OF THE WORLD CALLED HAVEN.

GEEP?
AYE, SPYEYE, SERVITOR WORRIES, FOR OF ALL THE PRETTY BOYS WITH WHOM RAADER COULD HAVE SHARED HER PLUNDER THIS NIGHT--
--SHE HAS CHOSEN THE BEDMATE OF HER RIVAL...BLACK BESS!
THAT'SH WHAT'S TROUBLE, SHURE!
TROUBLE?
RAADER!
TROUBLE INDEED!
WHY, BESS, I DID MISS YE AT MY REVEL!
BUT NOT OVERMUCH, METHINKS, FROM THE LOOKS OF THINGS!
HAVE YE NO STUD OF YOUR OWN, THEN, THAT YE HAVE TSTEAL MINE?
STEAL, BESS? AYE, AN THE LAD CAME TIME WILLING!
SICK HE WAS, HE SAID, OF SERVICING AN OLD SOW SUCH AS YOU!
IF HE SAID THAT, TRUE I'LL CUT HIS TONGUE OUT, SLUT--
--AFTER I'VE SEVERED YOURS!
YE'RE AIMIN' LOW, THEN, BESSIE!

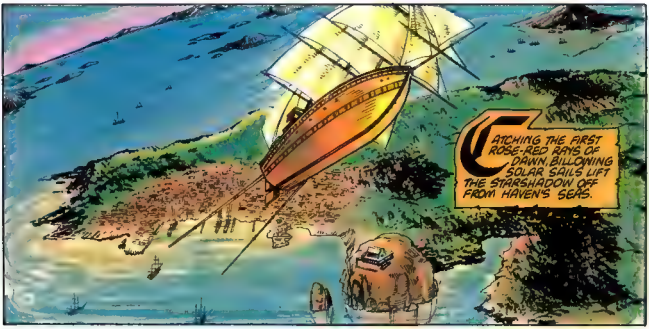
BUT IT STANDS T'REASON THAT IF AGE HAS AFFECTED YER LOVE-LIFE--
--IT'S AFFECTED YER EYESIGHT, TOO!
HER DIGNITY OFFENDED, BLACK BESS CALLS FOR AID...
...AND THE REVELLERS IN THE TAVERN ALL TOO WILLINGLY DIVIDE INTO FACTIONS.
SO, YE'LL DRINK RAADER'S BEER AN' THEN HOWL FOR HER HEAD, WILL YE?
IN SHORT ORDER, IT CEASES TO BECOME IMPORTANT WHO FIGHTS WHOM, OR FOR WHAT.
THE FIGHT IS EVERYTHING, THE FIGHT IS ALL.
ALL, THAT IS, UNTIL THE STRIFE TAKES A MORE SERIOUS TURN...
SPYEYE, NO! WHY MUST YOU COUPLE WITH SERVITOR NOW?!
THE BRAINLINK FORGED SPYEYE SEES THROUGH SERVITOR'S EYES...
...AND CRIES OUT A WARNING WITH SERVITOR'S LIPS.
MISS-TRESS, BEHIND THEE!
I'LL BE PAID WELL FOR DELIVERING THEE TO DEATH, CAPTAIN!
BY BLACK BESS? NO, YOU'RE NOT OF HER CREW!
A COLONIZER SPY, THEN, HERE ON HAVEN! FIRE AWAY TURNCOAT--
-IF YE'RE ABLE
GNNGG!
THOUGH THE SPY LOSES HIS SLAYER'S BOUNTY...

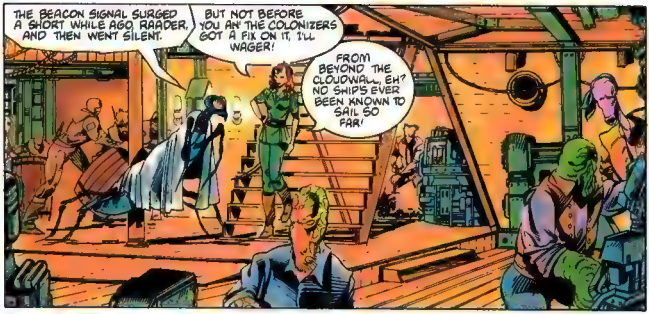
RAADER LOSES HER FOOTING.
SERVITOR HAS RAADER!
ALWAYS THERE WHEN I NEED YE, EH, FAITHFUL ONE? UNNNH..!
LADY! HAS RAADER A WOUND? IS RAADER DEAD?
GEEP!
DEAD DRUNK!
THE WILD REVEL IS DONE, SPYEYE!
IS TIME WE TOOK OUR RAADER... HOME!
THE NIGHTS ARE LONG ON THIS PIRATE WORLD..
...GIVING THOSE UNABLE TO SLEEP AMPLE TIME TO ADMIRE PIRATE MOONS RISING OVER PIRATE SEAS.
BUT RAADER SLUMBERS UNTIL SUN'S RISE, THOUGH HER THROBBING HEAD MAKES HER WISH THAT SHE COULD OVERSLEEP THE DAWN.
UHHNNNN..!
GROG! CURSE YER LIGHTS, MATE. I'LL PUKE LESS I DRINK O' THE HAIR O' THE DOG THAT BIT ME!
MUST HAVE..


THAT FOR WHICH SHE REACHES IS NOT A FLAGON, BUT A WAND...
-GROG!
...CONTAINING A FLOWER PLUCKED FROM A PLUNDERED PLANET AS A GIFT FOR ONE RAADER LOVES MORE DEARLY THAN ANY PRIZE SHE HAS EVER CRAVED.
OH, MOTHER-I'M SORRY!
NO NEED TO BE, DAUGHTER. SERVITOR TELLS ME YE'VE HAD QUITE A NIGHT OF IT.
RAADER SMILES. SHE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT SHE WHO REARED HER, OF ALL PEOPLE, WOULD UNDERSTAND.
BUT THE PIRATE QUEEN'S SMILE SWIFTLY GIVES WAY TO A SCOWL...
AYE, A LONG NIGHT, AND NOT YET DONE WITH.
LOGIK DETECTED A SIGNAL-BEACON FROM BEYOND THE CLOUDWALL.
IF THE STARSHADOW'S INSTRUMENTS COULD DETECT IT, CHILD, 'TIS CERTAIN THE COLONIZER ARMADA KNOWS OF IT, AS WELL.
AYE, THOUGH LOGIK SAYS NO ONE HAS EVER VENTURED SO FAR. THE BEACON'S SIGNAL IS SIMILAR TO THOSE THAT TRANSMIT FROM THE COLONIZER'S PROBES!
THAT MEANS THAT ONE OF THEIR EXPLORATORY SHIPS VENTURED BEYOND THE CLOUDWALL... AND FOUND A WORLD FIT FOR COLONIZATION!
THERE'S NO DOUBT BUT THAT THEIR CURIOSITY'LL BE AROUSED!
SO THE COLONIZERS CLAIM ANOTHER WORLD.
WHAT CARE YOU FOR THAT, RAADER?


WHY, ONLY THAT MY SWASHBUCKLERS AND I BE THERE TO TAKE THEIR PRECIOUS PLUNDER FROM THEM, MOTHER!
AND YOU'LL DESTROY THEIR SIGNAL BEACONS FOR THE FUN OF IT, DEPRIVING THEM OF NEW WORLDS TO DWELL ON, BUT THEY'LL FIND OTHERS, DAUGHTER. THEY ALWAYS HAVE. THEY ALWAYS SHALL. THAT IS THEIR NATURE AND THEIR DESTINY.
BUT WHAT, I WONDER, IS YOURS.
WHY, TO PILLAGE THE PILLAGERS, MOTHER, AN' THEN HIE BACK T'HAVEN T'PLAY WI' OUR PLUNDER!
BUT THE COLONIZERS MUST BE STOPPED FROM RAPING WORLDS, RAARDER, AND THE PIRATES ARE THE ONLY FORCE WITH SHIPS ENOUGH TO STOP THEM.
YE FORGET THAT I AM A PIRATE, MOTHER, AS YOU WERE BEFORE ME... AND NOT A PRIVATEER!
THE TWO WERE OFTEN DIFFICULT TO DISTINGUISH, RAARDER...
--IN THAT LONG AGO TIME WHEN I SAILED THE SEVEN SEAS OF EARTH!

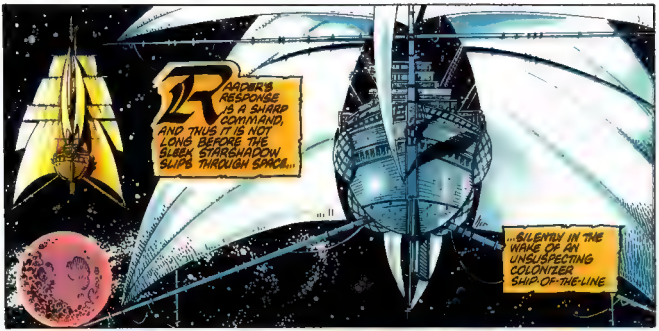
RAADER-?
YOUR PARDON, MOTHER! IT APPEARS MY CREW HAS NEED OF ME!
GEEP!
THE SIGNAL, SERVITOR?
AYE, RAADER! MOCKING MANTID SAYS COLONIZERS SCAN IT, TOO!
OF COURSE!
BUT WE CAN'T LET 'EM BEAT US T'THE SIGNAL'S SOURCE, CAN WE, MY HEARTIES?
NOT WHEN THERE'S A WORLD LYIN' THERE T'BE PLUNDERED!
A HELPLESS WORLD, RAADER, NEEDING YOUR HELP.
GOD HELPS THOSE THAT HELP THEMSELVES, MOTHER!
AN' HELP OURSELVES WE SWASHBUCKLERS SHALL!


CATCHING THE FIRST ROSE-RED RAYS OF DAWN, BILLOWING SOLAR SAILS LIFT THE STARSHADOW OFF FROM HAVEN'S SEAS.


THE BEACON SIGNAL SURGED A SHORT WHILE AGO, RAADER, AND THEN WENT SILENT.
BUT NOT BEFORE YOU AN' THE COLONIZERS GOT A FIX ON IT, I'LL WAGER!
FROM BEYOND THE CLOUDWALL, EH? NO SHIPS EVER BEEN KNOWN TO SAIL SO FAR!

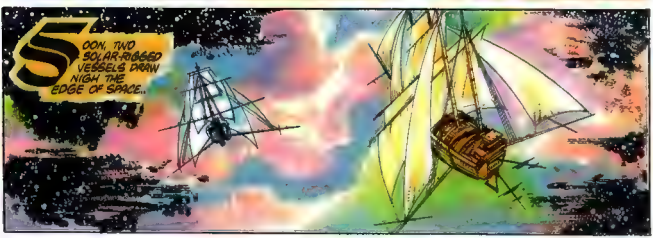
NOR HAS ANY CAPTAIN EVER DARED!
THE LEGENDS HAVE IT THAT THE CLOUDWALL WAS NOT SO IMPENETR-ABLE BEFORE OUR TIME, RAADER.
MY MOTHER CLAIMS HER LOST WORLD LAY BEYOND THE CLOUD-WALL!
AYE, AND YET THE COLONIZERS WHO CAPTURED HER HAVE MADE NO ATTEMPT SINCE THEN TO BREACH THE CLOUDWALL AND PROBE FOR OTHER WORLDS BEYOND.

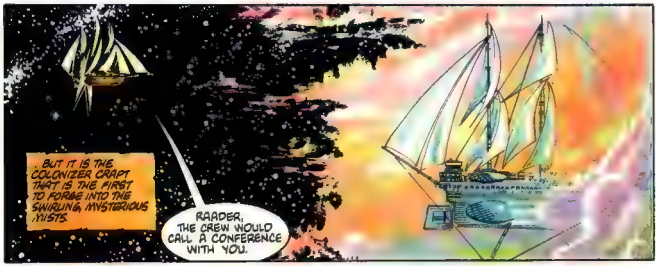
I FIND THAT DIFFICULT TO COMPREHEND, GIVEN HOW HARD-PRESSED THEY ARE TO FIND WORLDS FOR THEIR EVER-EXPAND-ING POPULATION TO INHABIT.
PERHAPS THE PERIL OF PASSAGE THROUGH THE CLOUDWALL WAS ENOUGH TO DETER 'EM, LOGIK.
PERHAPS, BUT NOW THIS FAINT SIGNAL ATTRACTS THEIR ATTENTION EVEN AS IT ATTRACTS OURS. IF WORLDS EXIST BEYOND THE CLOUDWALL, CAPTAIN, WHO WOULD YOU HAVE PLUNDER THEM-THE COLONIZERS OR US?


RADER'S RESPONSE IS A SHARP COMMAND, AND THUS IT IS NOT LONG BEFORE THE SLEEK STARSHADOW SLIPS THROUGH SPACE...
...SILENTLY IN THE WAKE OF AN UNSUSPECTING COLONIZER SHIP OF THE LINE.

APPARENTLY, THIS FRIGATE WAS NEAREST TO THE CLOUDWALL WHEN THE SIGNAL WAS INTERCEPTED!
THE ARMADA WILL SACRIFICE JUST ONE SHIP AT A TIME IN AN ATTEMPT TO PENETRATE THE CLOUDWALL.

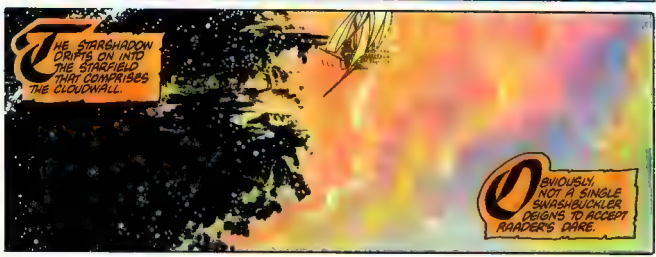
-BUT WE SHALL FIND THE WORLD ITS BRAVE CAPTAIN SEEKS, AND KEEP HIM FROM EVER REPORTING BACK WITH WORD OF HER TO THE ACCURSED ARMADA!

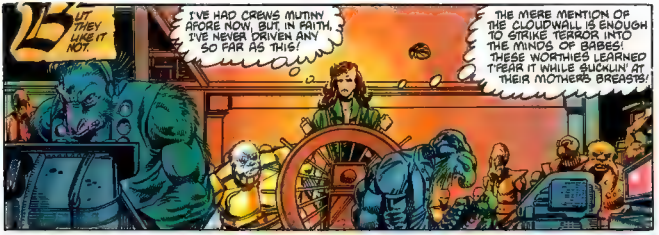

SOON, TWO SOLAR-RIGGED VESSELS DRAW NIGH THE EDGE OF SPACE...

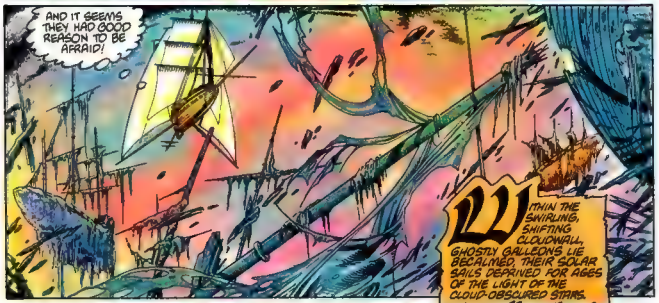

BUT IT IS THE COLONIZER CRAFT THAT IS THE FIRST TO FORAY INTO THE SWIRLING, MYSTERIOUS MISTS.
RAADER, THE CREW WOULD CALL A CONFERENCE WITH YOU.

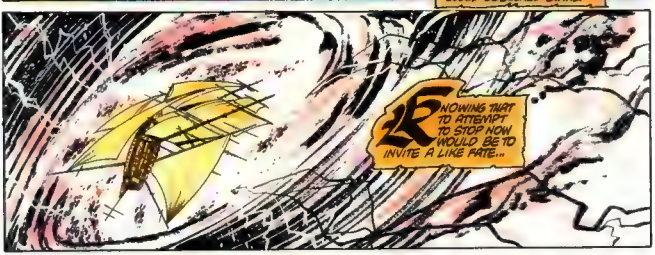
THE MOOD IS MUTINOUS ON THE STAR SHADOW'S QUARTERDECK.
TURN ABOUT, RAADER!
NO SHIP HAS EVER SAILED BEYOND THE CLOUDWALL AND RETURNED TO TELL OF IT
YOU JUST SAW THE COLONIZER SHIP WE CHASE SLIP THROUGH, MY HEARTIES!
LET THE WORLD-CLAIMERS CLAIM DEATH IF THEY CHOOSE!

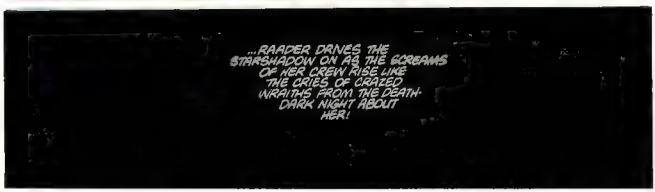
I COMMAND THIS SHIP, AND SHE GOES WHERE I STEER 'ER, MATES! THEM'S FACTS!
BUT IF THERE BE ANY O' YE MORE SCARED O' THE CLOUD-WALL THAN O' YER CAPTAIN'S SWORD, LET HIM OR HER TRY TO CHANGE MY MIND!

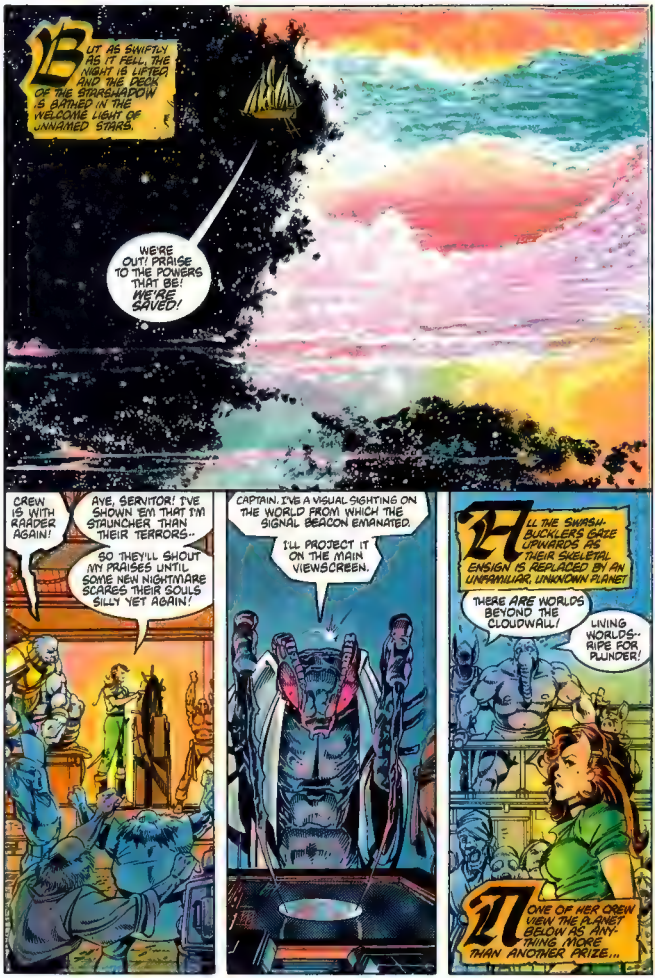

THE STARSHADOW DRIFTS ON INTO THE STARFIELD THAT COMPRISES THE CLOUDWALL.
OBVIOUSLY, NOT A SINGLE SWASHBUCKLER DEIGNS TO ACCEPT RAADER'S DARE.


BUT THEY LIKE IT NOT.
I'VE HAD CREWS MUTINY AFORE NOW, BUT IN FAITH, I'VE NEVER DRIVEN ANY SO FAR AS THIS!
THE MERE MENTION OF THE CLOUDWALL IS ENOUGH TO STRIKE TERROR INTO THE MINDS OF BABES! THESE WORTHIES LEARNED T'FEAR IT WHILE SUCKLIN' AT THEIR MOTHERS BREASTS!

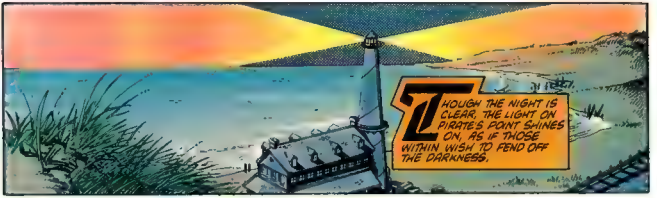

AND IT SEEMS THEY HAD GOOD REASON TO BE AFRAID!
WITHIN THE SWIRLING, SHIFTING CLOUDWALL, GHOSTLY GALLEONS LIE BECALMED, THEIR SOLAR SAILS DEPRIVED FOR AGES OF THE LIGHT OF THE CLOUD-OBSCURED STARS.

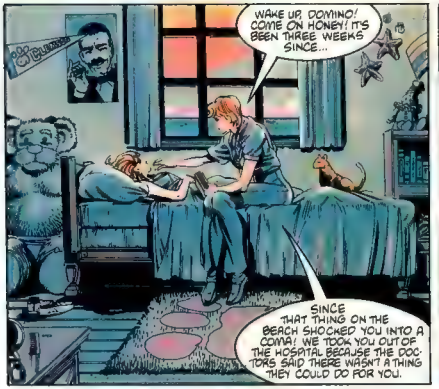

KNOWING THAT TO ATTEMPT TO STOP NOW WOULD BE TO INVITE A LIKE FATE...


...RAADER DRAWS THE STARSHADOW ON AS THE SCREAMS OF HER CREW RISE LIKE THE DRIBS OF CRAZED WRAITHS FROM THE DEATH-DARK NIGHT ABOUT HER!


BUT, AS SWIFTLY AS IT FELL, THE NIGHT IS LIFTED AND THE DESK OF THE STARSHADOW IS BATHED IN THE WELCOME LIGHT OF UNNAMED STARS.
WE'RE OUT! PRAISE TO THE POWERS THAT BE! WE'RE SAVED!
CREW IS WITH RAADER AGAIN!
AYE, SERVITOR! I'VE SHOWN 'EM THAT I'M STAUNCHER THAN THEIR TERRORS..
SO THEY'LL SHOUT MY PRAISES UNTIL SOME NEW NIGHTMARE SCARES THEIR SOULS SILLY YET AGAIN!
CAPTAIN. I'VE A VISUAL SIGHTING ON THE WORLD FROM WHICH THE SIGNAL BEACON EMANATED.
I'LL PROJECT IT ON THE MAIN VIEWSCREEN.
ALL THE SWASH-BUCKLERS GAZE UPWARDS AS THEIR SKELETAL ENSIGN IS REPLACED BY AN UNFAMILIAR, UNKNOWN PLANET
THERE ARE WORLDS BEYOND THE CLOUDWALL!
LIVING WORLDS.. RIPE FOR PLUNDER!
NONE OF HER CREW VIEW THE PLANET BELOW AS ANYTHING MORE THAN ANOTHER PRIZE...

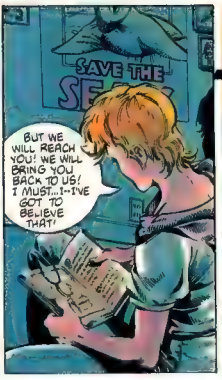
...BUT TO RAADER, THE SOFT GREEN LAND MASSES DIVIDED BY VAST EXPANSES OF SHIMMERING BLUE SEEMS ALMOST WEIRD OF MANY HER MOTHER ONCE SET HER TO TRACING WHEN SHE WAS BUT A CHILD ON HAVEN. MAPS OF THE WORLD FROM WHICH BONNIE BLACKTHORNE HAD BEEN TORN BY A COLONIZER COMMAND SHIP ON A FAR-RANGING RETRIEVAL RUN BEFORE RAADER WAS BORN. MAPS OF A LOST WORLD THAT HAD COME TO SEEM NO MORE THAN THE FAIRY TALES OF A HOMESICK WOMAN, UNTIL NOW... WHEN THE MEMORY OF THOSE MAPS SUDDENLY BECOMES...
MY MOTHER'S WORLD!
EARTH!


THOUGH THE NIGHT IS CLEAR, THE LIGHT ON PIRATE'S POINT SHINES ON, AS IF THOSE WITHIN WISH TO FEND OFF THE DARKNESS.


WAKE UP, DOMINO! COME ON HONEY! IT'S BEEN THREE WEEKS SINCE...
SINCE THAT THING ON THE BEACH SHOCKED YOU INTO A COMA! WE TOOK YOU OUT OF THE HOSPITAL BECAUSE THE DOCTORS SAID THERE WASN'T A THING THEY COULD DO FOR YOU.

"NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT," THEY SAID. "NO NEED FOR LIFE SUPPORT! ALL BODY FUNCTIONS ARE IN STASIS!" THEY SAID.
ONLY MY LITTLE GIRL MAY NEVER WAKE UP AGAIN... OH, DOMINO...!

I...I'M SORRY, HONEY. ONLY IT'S SO HARD FOR DADDY AND ME TO SIT HERE NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, TALKING TO YOU, READING TO YOU...
..NOT KNOWING WHETHER YOU HEAR US, NOT KNOWING HOW TO REACH YOU!


SAVE THE
BUT WE WILL REACH YOU! WE WILL BRING YOU BACK TO US! I MUST...I--I'VE GOT TO BELIEVE THAT!

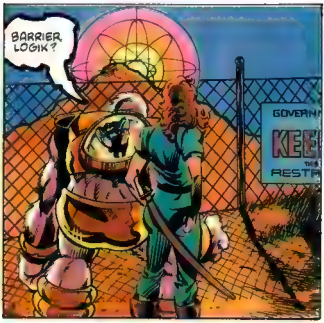
FROM A DOG-EARED COPY OF HOWARD PYLE'S "BOOK OF PIRATES," WHICH SHE HAS BEEN READING TO HER UNCONSCIOUS DAUGHTER, MRS. DRAKE TAKES A LOCKET THAT HAS SERVED DOMINO FOR YEARS AS A BOOKMARK.
YOU LOVED THIS LOCKET SO, WITH ITS PICTURE OF BONNIE BLACKTHORNE, OUR ANCESTOR!

HERE, KIDDO! HOLD ONTO IT! MAYBE IT'LL MAKE YOU REMEMBER HOW MUCH YOU LOVED IT!
AND MAYBE REMEMBERING WILL BRING YOU BACK TO US!
HOKING ON HER OWN PRAYERS, PAMELA DRAKE JOINS HER HUSBAND JIM ON THE WINDSWEPT OBSERVATION DECK OF THE ISOLATED SOUTH CAROLINA LIGHTHOUSE...
GETTING COLD.
I THINK THERE'S A STORM COMING.
OH, PAM!
JIM!
GOD HELP OUR BABY!
HE NIGHT EXPLODES WITH UNEARTHLY LIGHT...

...AND A PIRATE SHIP SAILS OUT OF THE SKY!
MOTHER...I'M HOME!

I--I DON'T BELIEVE THIS IS HAPPENING! BUT THEN, I DIDN'T BELIEVE IN THAT THING THAT ROBBED US OF DOMINO, EITHER!
WE'VE GOT TO ALERT THE SOLDIERS DOWN ON THE BEACH!
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU, PAM? WHY ARE YOU JUST STANDING THERE STARING LIKE THAT?
THAT STRANGE WOMAN IN THE LONGBOAT'S BOW...
SHE LOOKS ENOUGH LIKE ME TO BE MY SISTER!
UNAWARE--OR UNCONCERNED--THAT HUMAN EYES OBSERVE THEM, THE SWASHBUCKLERS GROUND THEIR LONGBOAT ON THE BEACH UPON WHICH THEIR INSTRUMENTS HAVE TOLD THEM THEY SHALL FIND THE COLONIZER SIGNAL BEACON.
BUT NO SIGN O' THE COLONIZER SHIP, RAADER!
MEBBE IT GOT LOST INSIDE THE CLOUDWALL!
I WOULDN'T MIND NOT HAVIN' TFIGHT FOR OUR PLUNDER!
PLUNDER? AYE, MAYHAP WHEN I GIVE THE ORDER, SHIPMATES, AN' NOT BEFORE!
BUT FIRST, LET'S HAVE A LOOK AT THE BEACON THAT DREW US HERE!
GOVERNMENT AR
KEEP OUT
THIS P
RESTRICTE

MY INSTRUMENTS READ IT AS BEING DEAD AHEAD, CAPTAIN. JUST BEYOND THAT BARRIER CONFRONTING YOU.

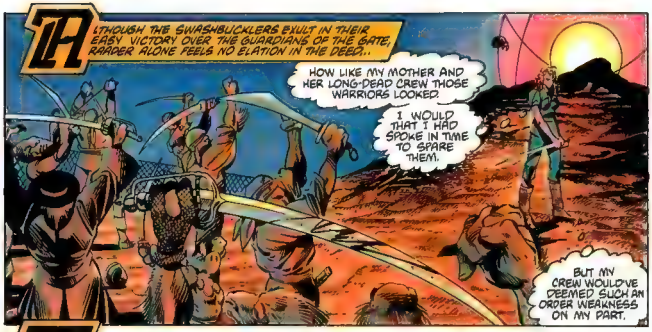

BARRIER LOGIK?

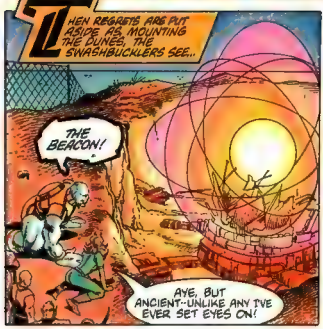
WHAT BARRIER?!
SHRAK!

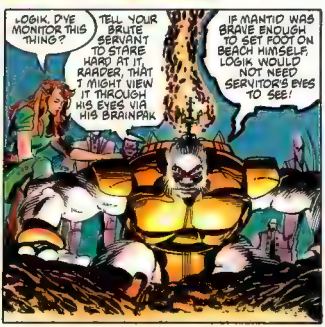
EVER SINCE THE DISCOVERY OF THE STRANGE ALIEN BEACON, THE COAST GUARDS HAVE KEPT UNDER ROUND-THE-CLOCK GUARD...
HALT! WHO GOES--

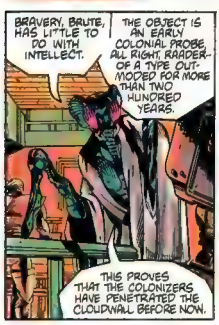
--THERE?!

YARRR


THOUGH THE SWASHBUCKLERS EXULT IN THEIR EASY VICTORY OVER THE GUARDIANS OF THE GATE, RAADER ALONE FEELS NO ELATION IN THE DEED...
HOW LIKE MY MOTHER AND HER LONG-DEAD CREW THOSE WARRIORS LOOKED.
I WOULD THAT I HAD SPOKE IN TIME TO SPARE THEM.
BUT MY CREW WOULD'VE DEEMED SUCH AN ORDER WEAKNESS ON MY PART.


THEN REGRETS ARE PUT ASIDE AS, MOUNTING THE DUNES, THE SWASHBUCKLERS SEE...
THE BEACON!
AYE, BUT ANCIENT--UNLIKE ANY I'VE EVER SET EYES ON!


LOGIK, D'YE MONITOR THIS THING?
TELL YOUR BRUTE SERVANT TO STARE HARD AT IT, RAADER, THAT I MIGHT VIEW IT THROUGH HIS EYES VIA HIS BRAINPAK
IF MANTID WAS BRAVE ENOUGH TO SET FOOT ON BEACH HIMSELF, LOGIK WOULD NOT NEED SERVITOR'S EYES TO SEE!

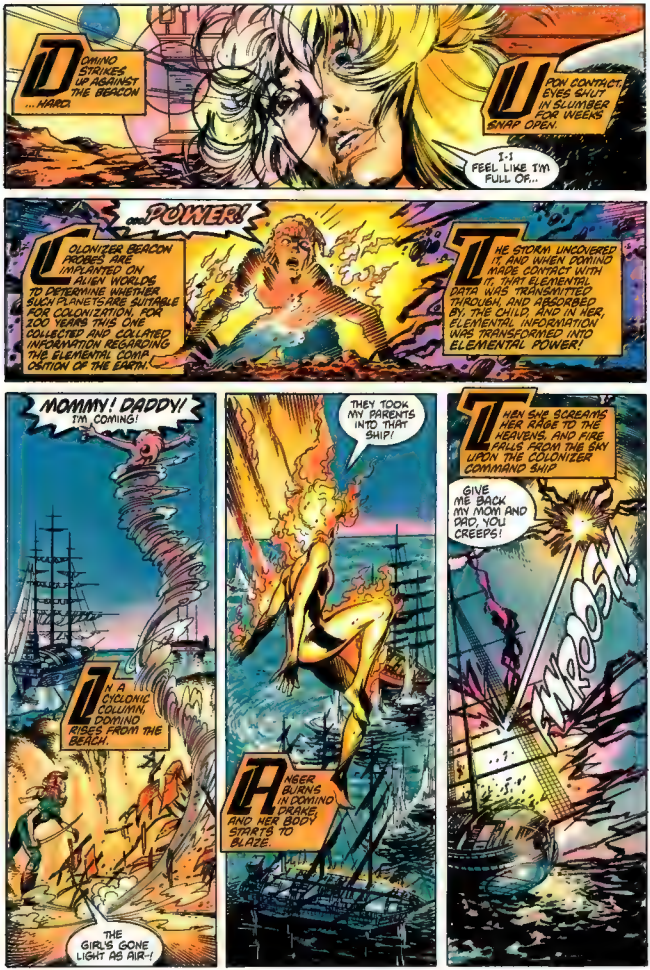

BRAVERY, BRUTE, HAS LITTLE TO DO WITH INTELLECT.
THE OBJECT IS AN EARLY COLONIAL PROBE, ALL RIGHT, RAADER--OF A TYPE OUT-MODED FOR MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED YEARS.
THIS PROVES THAT THE COLONIZERS HAVE PENETRATED THE CLOUDWALL BEFORE NOW.

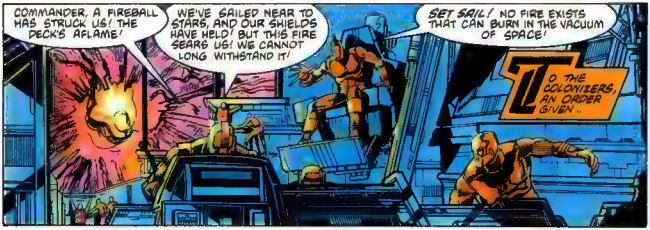
AYE, LONG, LONG AGO, WHEN THEY CAPTURED MY MOTHER AN' HER PIRATE CREW! BUT WHY DID THEY NOT STAY T'PILLAGE HER WORLD?
PERMISSION TO PLUNDER, CAPTAIN?

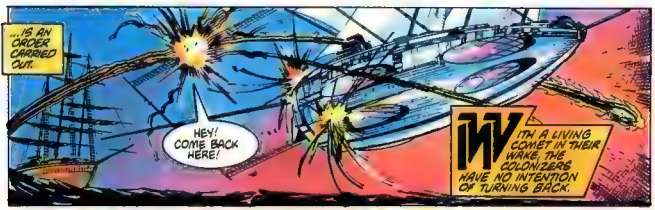
EH? NAY, MATE! THERE'LL BE NO PLUNDER!
NOT THIS TIME! NOT ON THIS WORLD

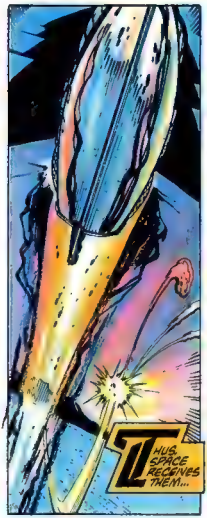
THE STUNNED SILENCE THAT GREETS RAADER'S PRONOUNCEMENT IS DEAFENING. THEN STRAINED CURSES EXPLODE FROM HER OUTRAGED CREW.
DAMN YE, WOMAN! WE'D FOLLOW YE THEU AN BACK... BUT FOR BOOTY!
WHY ELSE WOULD WE DARE THE CLOUDWALL IF NOT FOR PLUNDER?
THIS WORLD IS DIFFERENT, MATE! THIS WORLD WE'RE GOING TO SAVE FROM THE COLONIZERS!
WHAT? STAND AN' FIGHT WHEN WE COULD PILLAGE AN' BE GONE AFORE THEY GET HERE?!
MAYHAPS 'TIS TIME WE CHOSE A NEW CAPTAIN, MATES!
AS RAADER PREPARES TO PUT DOWN THE SECOND MUTINY TO ARISE ON THIS SHORT VOYAGE, LOGIK'S VISAGE APPEARS AGAIN ON SERVITOR'S BRAINPAN...
RAADER, THE CLOUDWALL OPENS AGAIN...
LOOK TO THE SKIES!
AS RAVING LOST ITS WAY INSIDE THE CLOUDWALL, THE COLONIZER COMMAND-SHIP AT LAST EMERGES...
VREET VREET
SHTROW!
SHE'S RAKIN' THE STARSHADOW WI' A BROADSIDE--AN' SHE'S GOT US PINNED DOWN ON THE BEACH!
WHEN THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION, THE MUTINY IS RESCHEDULED FOR A LATER TIME.

VREET VREET PWOW
JIM, WHAT--?!
CANNONADE! THERE'S A FULL-SCALE SEA-BATTLE GOING ON OUT THERE!
I COULDN'T RAISE THE COAST GUARD! RADIO'S GONE DEAD AND THERE'S SOME KIND OF STATIC ON THE PHONE LINES!
GIVE ME DOMINO, PAM! WE'RE GETTING HER INTO THE LAND ROVER AND GETTING OUT OF HERE!
JIM, NO! I-I CAN'T EXPLAIN IT, BUT SOMEHOW I KNOW NOW THAT DOMINO WILL ONLY BE WELL IF WE CAN GET HER BACK TO THE BEACON DOWN ON THE BEACH!
HAVE YOU GONE CRAZY? THE BEACON'S WHAT DID THIS TO HER IN THE FIRST PLACE! BESIDES, THERE ARE TWO ALIEN ARMIES ASSEMBLED OUT THERE--!
CORRECTION: ONE OF THOSE ALIEN ARMIES HAS JUST BROUGHT THE WAR HOME TO THE DRAKES.
MOMENTS LATER...
GIVE ME BACK MY BABY..
EH?!
PLANET-DWELLERS! EVEN WHILE WE FIGHT, THE COLONIZERS SEEK TO CAPTURE THEM AS SPECIMENS! ORDINARILY, I WOULD NOT CARE, BUT THIS IS MY MOTHER'S WORLD...!
RAGER RACES TO THE DRAKES' AID..
...AND MANAGES TO CUT DOWN THE COLONIZER CARRYING THE COMATOSE DOMINO...
...JUST BEFORE A CANNONADE RIPS APART THE BEACH AND HURLS BOTH WOMAN AND GIRL INTO THE BEACON PIT.


DOMINO STRAINES UP AGAINST THE BEACON ...HARD!
UPON CONTACT, EYES SNAP IN SLUMBER FOR WEEKS SNAP OPEN.
I-I FEEL LIKE I'M FULL OF...
...POWER!
COLONIZER BEACON PROBES ARE IMPLANTED ON ALIEN WORLDS TO DETERMINE WHETHER SUCH PLANETS ARE SUITABLE FOR COLONIZATION. FOR 100 YEARS THIS ONE COLLECTED AND COLLATED INFORMATION REGARDING THE ELEMENTAL COMPOSITION OF THE EARTH.
THE STORM UNCOVERED IT. AND WHEN DOMINO MADE CONTACT WITH IT, THAT ELEMENTAL DATA WAS TRANSMITTED THROUGH, AND ABSORBED BY, THE CHILD. AND IN HER, ELEMENTAL INFORMATION WAS TRANSFORMED INTO ELEMENTAL POWER!
MOMMY! DADDY! I'M COMING!
IN A CYCLONIC COLUMN, DOMINO RISES FROM THE BEACH!
THE GIRL'S GONE LIGHT AS AIR-!
THEY TOOK MY PARENTS INTO THAT SHIP!
ANGER BURNS IN DOMINO DRAKE, AND HER BODY STARTS TO BLAZE.
THEN SHE SCREAMS HER RAGE TO THE HEAVENS, AND FIRE RAILS FROM THE SKY UPON THE COLONIZER COMMAND SHIP
GIVE ME BACK MY MOM AND DAD, YOU CREEPS!
KROOSH!


COMMANDER, A FIREBALL HAS STRUCK US! THE DECKS AFLAME!
WE'VE SAILED NEAR TO STARS, AND OUR SHIELDS HAVE HELD! BUT THIS FIRE SEARS US! WE CANNOT LONG WITHSTAND IT!
SET SAIL! NO FIRE EXISTS THAT CAN BURN IN THE VACUUM OF SPACE!
TO THE COLONIZERS, AN ORDER GIVEN..

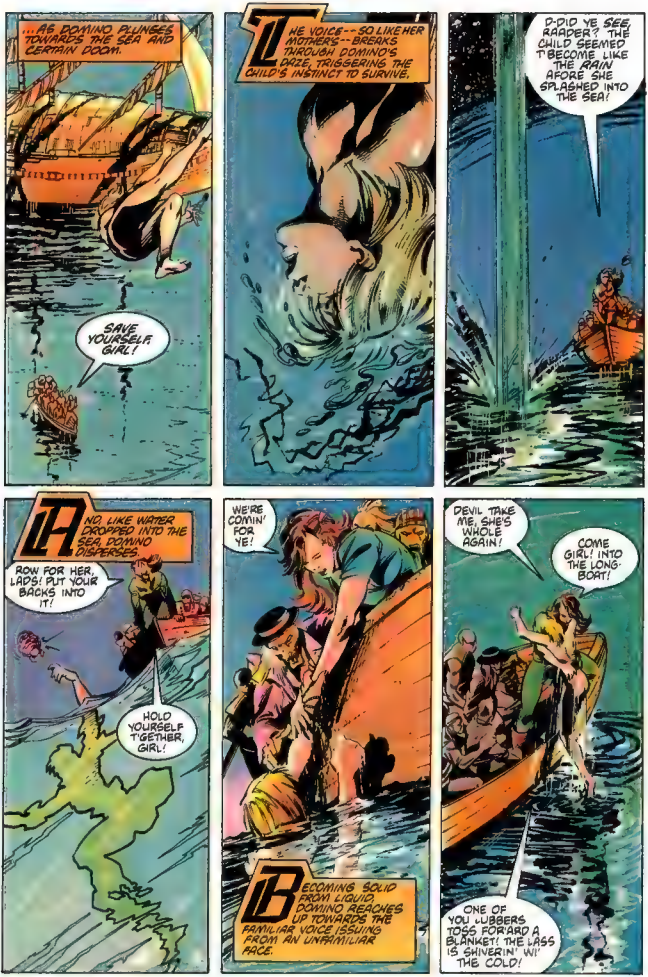

...IS AN ORDER CARRIED OUT.
HEY! COME BACK HERE!
WITH A LIVING COMET IN THEIR WAKE, THE COLONIZERS HAVE NO INTENTION OF TURNING BACK.


THUS, SPACE RECEIVES THEM...

AND THE AIRLESSNESS OF SPACE EXTINGUISHES DOMIC'S FLAME.

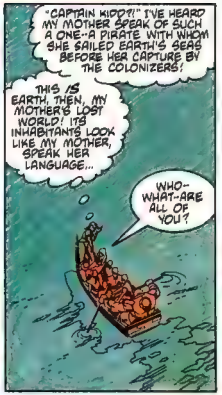
FAR BELOW...
THIS IS MADNESS! WHAT BECAME OF THE CHILD? CAN THIS TRULY BE MY MOTHER'S WORLD? SHE POSSESSES NO SUCH POWER AS...
THE GIRL, RAADER!

SHE FALLS! SHE FALLS FROM THE SKY!
THERE IS NAUGHT RAADER CAN DO SAVE STAND AND STARE...

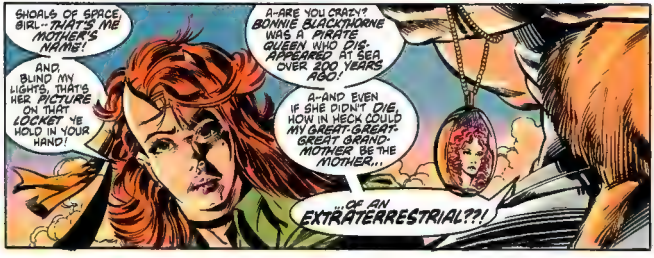

...AS DOMINO PLUNGES TOWARDS THE SEA AND CERTAIN DOOM.
SAVE YOURSELF, GIRL!
THE VOICE -- SO LIKE HER MOTHER'S -- BREAKS THROUGH DOMINO'S DAZE, TRIGGERING THE CHILD'S INSTINCT TO SURVIVE.
D-DID YE SEE, RAADER? THE CHILD SEEMED T'BECOME LIKE THE RAIN AFORE SHE SPLASHED INTO THE SEA!
AND, LIKE WATER DROPPED INTO THE SEA, DOMINO DISPERSES.
ROW FOR HER, LADS! PUT YOUR BACKS INTO IT!
HOLD YOURSELF TOGETHER, GIRL!
WE'RE COMIN' FOR YE!
BECOMING SOLID FROM LIQUID, DOMINO REACHES UP TOWARDS THE FAMILIAR VOICE, ISSUING FROM AN UNFAMILIAR FACE.
DEVIL TAKE ME, SHE'S WHOLE AGAIN!
COME GIRL! INTO THE LONG-BOAT!
ONE OF YOU LUBBERS TOSS FORARD A BLANKET! THE LASS IS SHIVERIN' WI' THE COLD!

YOU SAVED US FROM THE COLONIZERS, GIRL!
AND YOU SAVED MY CAT!
THE ANIMAL LEAPED ON BOARD THE LONGBOAT AS WE SHOVED OFF FROM THE BEACH, RAADER!

WE'LL FIND MOM AND DAD, WON'T WE, CAPN' KIDD?

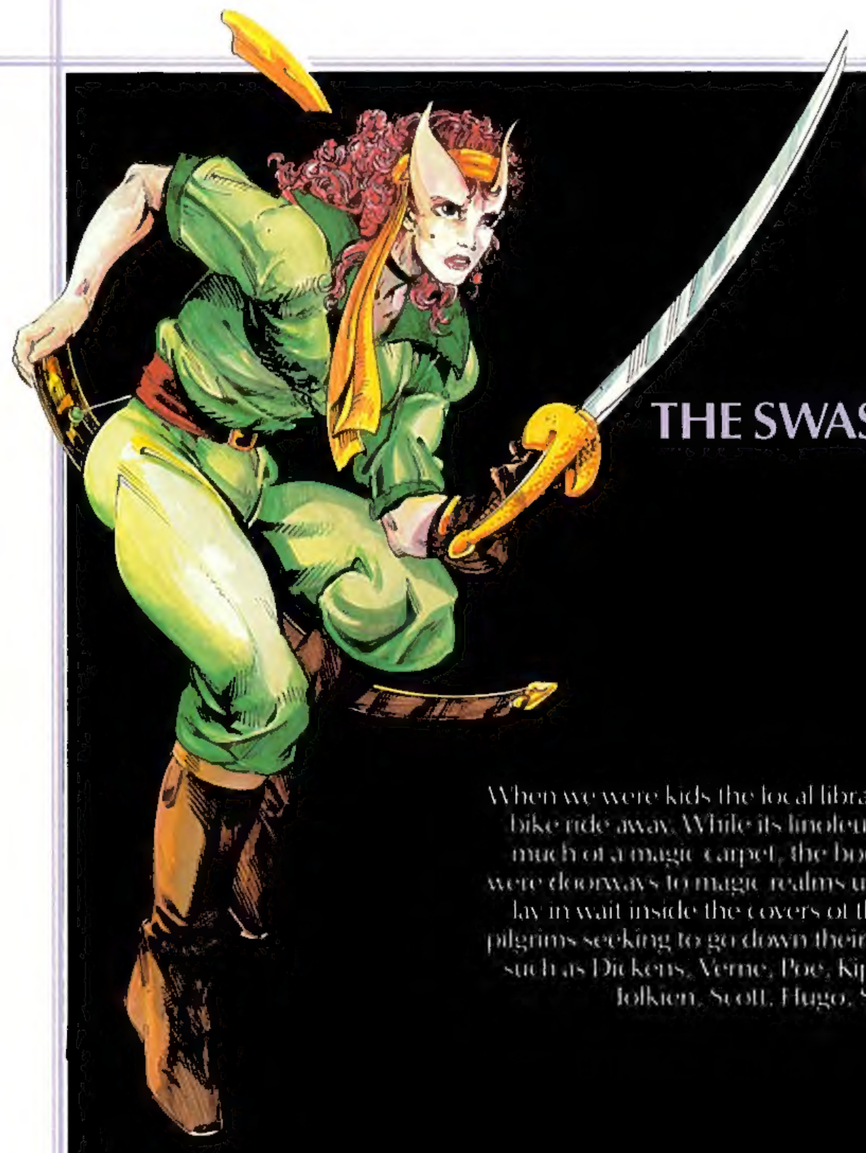

"CAPTAIN KIDD?!" I'VE HEARD MY MOTHER SPEAK OF SUCH A ONE--A PIRATE WITH WHOM SHE SAILED EARTH'S SEAS BEFORE HER CAPTURE BY THE COLONIZERS!
THIS IS EARTH, THEN. MY MOTHER'S LOST WORLD! IT'S INHABITANTS LOOK LIKE MY MOTHER, SPEAK HER LANGUAGE...
WHO--WHAT--ARE ALL OF YOU?

WE ARE THE SWASHBUCKLERS, GIRL! PIRATES ALL! I'M THE CAPTAIN O' THIS MOTLEY CREW, AN' YE CAN CALL ME RAADER! BUT WHAT NAME O'E CLAIM?
ME? MY NAME'S DOMINO DRAKE... DOMINO BLACKTHORNE DRAKE!
LASS, DID...DID YE SAY-- BLACKTHORNE?


SHOALS OF SPACE, GIRL--THAT'S ME MOTHER'S NAME!
AND, BLIND MY LIGHTS, THAT'S HER PICTURE ON THAT LOCKET YE HOLD IN YOUR HAND!
A-ARE YOU CRAZY? BONNIE BLACKTHORNE WAS A PIRATE QUEEN WHO DIED APPEARED AT SEA OVER 200 YEARS AGO!
A-AND EVEN IF SHE DIDN'T DIE, HOW IN HECK COULD MY GREAT-GREAT-GREAT GRANDMOTHER BE THE MOTHER...
...OF AN EXTRATERRESTRIAL?!!

LASS, I DON'T KNOW, BUT AS SOON AS I GET BACK HOME, I BLOODY WELL INTEND TO FIND OUT!
PULL FOR THE STARSHADOW, SWASHBUCKLERS! WE SET SAIL FOR HAVEN!
THOUGH IN A STATE OF SHOCK, STUNNED BY ALL THAT HAS HAPPENED TO HER, DOMINO DRAKE ACCOMPANIES THE CAPTAIN AND HER CREW BACK TO THE STARS. HER HOME PLANET HAS BEEN SAVED, BUT DOMINO SUSPECTS THAT ONLY WITH THE HELP OF THESE SWASHBUCKLERS WILL SHE EVER BE ABLE TO RESCUE HER PARENTS... AND SOLVE THE MYSTERY OF HER RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ALIEN WOMAN WARRIOR RAIDER.

Dedicated to Anne Bonney and Mary Reid.



THE SAGA OF THE SWASHBUCKLERS

When we were kids the local library was rarely more than a bike ride away. While its linoleum floors never seemed much of a magic carpet, the books on its dusty shelves were doorways to magic realms undreamed of. Adventures lay in wait inside the covers of those books. Guides for pilgrims seeking to go down their bold byways bore names such as Dickens, Verne, Poe, Kipling, Doyle, Burroughs, Tolkien, Scott, Hugo, Sabatini...Pyle.

When we grew older, we discovered other avenues providing access to adventure. Movies, theater, music, television, art...comic books. The list of the names of those who guided us on such strange and wondrous sojourns expanded to include Flynn, Welles, Laughton, Disney, Lucas, Spielberg, Hitchcock, Shakespeare, Mozart, Mussourgsky, Beethoven, Roddenberry, Serling, Wyeth, Pyle again, Doré, Foster, Raymond, Lee and Kirby and many, many more.

We soaked those sources up, incorporated them into our beings, struggled—as we became professional pictorial storytellers—to give substance to the sum of the source-material we had absorbed, to discover in our own work something of the magic that we'd discovered in the works of others, to bring that same sense of wonder to the readers of our stories, that same sense of adventure.

Both of us have labored in the field of pictorial fiction...in the writing and drawing of those unique forms of literature called comic books...for years. We have tried consistently to be innovative, entertaining, exciting. When we have failed to instill in you, our readers, that sense of wonder that rewarded us as children in exploring through the works of others other realities, it was not for want of trying. When we have succeeded, we have been swept up in the glory of the undertaking along with you.

SWORDS OF THE SWASHBUCKLERS is our way of saying "thank you" to the members of the human race, living and dead, who inspired us. It is our homage to the past, our legacy to the future.

May you find wonder and glory and adventure in its pages.

If you don't, it will not be—as we've said—for our lack of trying.

Peace.

Bill Mantlo

Jackson Guice

Special thanks go to Donna Lieberman, our legal eagle, Jim Shooter, the creator's best friend, Mike Hobson, a true gentleman, Mrs. Guice's bulldog Butch, and...of course...to Bob Layton (the Lord alone knows why).